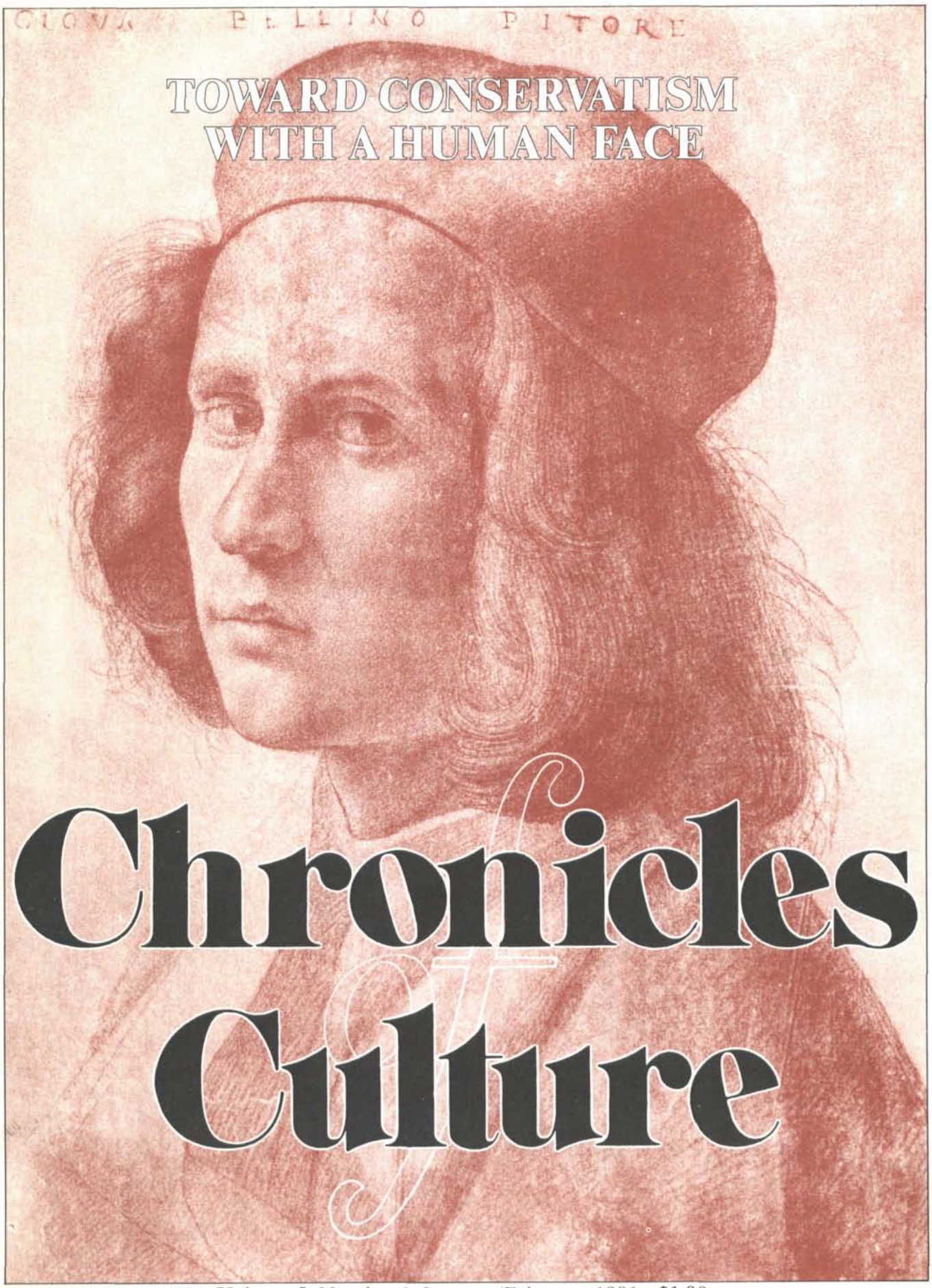


TOWARD CONSERVATISM WITH A HUMAN FACE

Chronicles of Culture

Volume 5, Number 1, January/February 1981 $1.00

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Contents

4 Editor's Comment — Leopold Tyrmand

Opinions & Views

6 From Robespierre with Love — James J. Thompson, Jr.
—Bertram Gross: *Friendly Fascism*
—Richard Lingeman: *Small Town America*

8 In Defense of Infamy — Alan J. Levine
—Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman: *The Political Economy of Human Rights*

10 Of Morals & Manners — Stephen L. Tanner
—Ian Watt: *Conrad in the Nineteenth Century*
—Millicent Bell: *Marquand: An American Life*

12 Ineptitude, Mendacity & Ignorance — Paul Gottfried
—Ronald Steel: *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*

14 All in the Family — Gary S. Vasilash
—Todd Gitlin: *The Whole World is Watching*

16 FDR and His Iago — Otto J. Scott
—Michael R. Beschloss: *Kennedy and Roosevelt*

19 Familial Pluralism — Joseph Schwartz
—Frederick Busch: *Rounds*

20 On Economic Dreams and Facts — William E. Cage
—Lester C. Thurow: *The Zero-Sum Society*

22 Desperation Transformed into Transcendence — Allan C. Brownfeld
—*Arna Bontemps-Langston Hughes: Letters 1925-1967:* Edited by Charles H. Nichols

25 Speculating About Justice — Clarence B. Carson
—Charles Rembar: *The Law of the Land*

26 A Captivating Jeremiah Amidst Us — Philip F. Lawler
—*Solzhenitsyn at Harvard:* Edited by Ronald Berman

Commendables

29 Podhoretz's Monition — Alan J. Levine
—Norman Podhoretz: *The Present Danger*

In Focus

29 Photography & Style — Mary Ellen Fox
—*Beaton:* Edited by James Danziger

30 Perceptibles

Waste of Money

30 Hypocrisy as Heroism — Edward J. Walsh
—Irvin Faust: *Newsreel*

Screen

31 Pride and Prejudice and Cliché People — Eric Shapearo
—*Kagemusha*
—*Private Benjamin*
—*Ordinary People*

Stage

33 The Bard Bowdlerized
—*A Midsummer Night's Dream*

Art

34 Hopper at Whitney

Correspondence

34 Letter from Paris: The French "New Right" — Thomas Molnar

36 Letter from New York: Atonality and *Der Blaue Reiter* — Joshua Gilder

The American Proscenium

38 What Happened in November 1980?

39 No Honeymoon for Mr. Reagan

40 Mr. Anderson—Suggestion—Mega-Abortion

Journalism

40 The World of *The Nation*

42 Gurus & Pundits
Liberal Logic

Liberal Culture

5 Timely Reminder from the Beyond—Romeo—We Need You!, 31 Best Minds, 32 Sexology at Wayne, 35 Pearls of Wisdom, 43 John Lennon RIP

Vol. 4, No. 6 November/December 1980

The Third Party

Tyrmand: Editor's Comment; Schwartz on Percy *(The Second Coming);* Cage on Heilbroner and Harrington *(Marxism: For and Against, Decade of Decision);* Vasilash on Beattie, Kaplan, Dybek *(Falling in Place, O My America!, Childhood and Other Neighborhoods);* Thompson on Liddy *(Will);* Pilon on Morris *(Plains Song);* Levine on Nixon *(The Real War);* Murphy on Gold *(He/She);* Pradl on Degler and Henslin *(At Odds, Marriage and Family in a Changing Society);* Albin on Eveland *(Ropes of Sand);* Carson on Lens *(Unrepentant Radical);* Scott on McDowell *(To Keep Our Honor Clean);* Hippler on Daws *(A Dream of Islands);* Steensma on Greene *(Doctor Fischer of Geneva or The Bomb Party);* In Focus; Waste of Money; Screen; Art; Music; Correspondence; The American Proscenium; Journalism; Liberal Culture; Social Register.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Chronicles of Culture

Volume 5, Number 1 January/February 1981

Toward Conservatism with a Human Face

Chronicles of Culture (ISSN 0163-1187) is published bimonthly by The Rockford Institute, P.O. Box 5705, Rockford, Illinois, 61125. Editorial and business offices: (815) 226-4015. President: John Howard; Editor: Leopold Tyrmand; Publishing Manager: Richard A. Vaughan; Assistant to the Editor: Becki Klute; Research Associate: Lindy Ellingwood. Printed by Wilson-Hall Co. Cover: "Suo Ritratto" by Giovanni Bellini (1430-1516), from the MacLeish Collection, The Rare Print Cabinet, Rockford College Library. Original vignette by Warren Chappell. Subscriptions: $6.00 one year.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Editor's Comment

On the threshold of the 1980's, we wish to make it clear that:

—the deepest sources of discord in America are not political or economic, but ideological and cultural;

—the two main political parties are ideologically undefinable; their differences are in sociopolitical postulates;

—the authentic and meaningful disagreement is between those who call themselves conservatives and those who call themselves liberals.

The conservative and liberal Weltanschauungs are time-honored, rich and deeply embedded in cognitive and ethical traditions. The historical worth of their principles, the complexity of their moral impulses, the wealth of their ideas and the amplitude of their intellectual perspectives allow for the infinity of individual endeavors. They constitute primary components of the American civilization, its social reality and political landscape.

What brings these disparate worldviews together is the constitutional republic engendered by our founding fathers, who were motivated by both conservative and liberal instincts. This republic became the home of a sturdy democracy and—for the next two centuries—an arena for conservative-liberal contention.

Essentially, what distinguishes a conservative from a liberal in today's America is their respective notions of moral and intellectual values, as well as the relation of those values to existential change and the vision of a society. Consequently, the centrality of freedom, and its interaction with the concepts of progress, equality and justice, constitutes the substance of mutual distrust.

Whatever liberalism meant in other times and places, its modern American brand derives most of its epistemology from Rousseau, a good deal of its social ethics from Marxian philosophy, and its personal morality from post-Freudian psychology. Such ideological inspirations loom—from a conservative viewpoint—as a threat to America's civilizational heritage and destiny. Even the deistic thinkers and secular rationalists who stood at America's cradle would have had difficulty recognizing their philosophical premises in the liberal America of the 1960's. In that acme of American liberalism's triumph and sway, student mobs which were already free to express whatever they wished demanded freedom in the freest country and least coercive polity on earth. In the most successful capitalistic society in history, anti-capitalism became the biggest business and the easiest scheme for acquiring inordinate riches. The American civilization, which was founded on reason, has been debilitated in the very sites of higher learning. A half-century of liberal indoctrination of the intellectual elites and opinion-making industries has borne a fruit whose poisonousness is obvious to any unprejudiced mind. A respectable ideology has generated an all-pervading cultural climate in which a far-from-respectable culture flourishes.

By a multitude of means and for a variety of reasons, liberals have assumed a distinct hegemony over the American culture. For over 50 years they have dominated the popular culture, the media, education on all levels. Whether it was a conscious effort or a confluence of sociohistorical factors that brought them to ascendancy is a subject of ongoing inquiry. The fact remains that the liberal governance of culture has been blatantly autocratic in its methods. Conservative intellectual efforts, although alive and vigorous, are unreflected in the mirror of the media. Conservative scholarship is unreported. Nonliberal thinkers and theorists are unlisted in encyclopedias. Books with conservative or nonliberal messages are rejected by publishers. When published by provincial houses, these books pass unreviewed by the press. Unabashed tokenism has replaced cultural fairness. The once-liberal virtue of tolerant consideration has been supplanted by the strategy of extirpating the conservative presence from American intellectual life.

Yet the conservative presence in culture is crucial to the fate of conservatism in America. Such presence is contingent on an ideological offensive more than any other sociopolitical effort. American conservatism originates in the commitment to the tenets of democracy, pluralism and the social contract which begot America. Thus, any attempt to instill the proper perception of conservatism in American public opinion must begin with proclaiming the conservative defense of:

—human dignity against the onslaught of valuelessness and false values;

—the idea of progress against utopianism;

—the common man's ethos and the legitimacy of his spiritual and material aspirations;

—the man-woman balance of powers, the source of every civilization on this planet;

—the human soul against the assault of fashionable scientistic sorceries;

—the fabric of life's normalcy, without which the pursuit of happiness is but an empty slogan;

—the middle-class way of life, often called the bourgeois

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

culture, which the evidence from recent decades has proved to be morally and existentially superior to any other behavioral proposition.

The liberal occupation of the American mind, of American sensitivities, of the American sense of moral attractiveness, daily choices, preferences, proclivities and even everyday logic, creates an unhealthy situation in which conservative counterproposals are doomed to a stunted existence. The liberal appropriation of the sole franchise for the entire gamut of social feelings—like compassion for the needy, social conscience, the decency of political mores, respect for progress—results in a pervading bitterness among those Americans who disbelieve in the fundamentals of the liberal worldview. The liberal engineering of the American mind and American sensibilities—as it is performed in mass culture—paves the way for subversion of the American community by ideologies which are fiercely hostile to both conservatism *and* liberalism. It also restricts the American conservative to an exclusively political mode of expression which, in the long run, may prove to be destructive to the historic compromise between reason and conscience on which the American civilization has thrived for so long.

The American conservative must realize that—contrary to Marx's predictions—politics and economy have become, in our epoch, functions of culture. Neither political victory nor economic preponderance can assure the conservative of any participation in shaping the national ethos. Only the conservative presence in culture can offer that power. It is not so much the liberal federal government's greed for taxes, but its usurpation of our consciences and its attempts to dictate how we should love one another, which most offends the conservative sense of integrity and values. The final struggle for values which govern both human consciousness and social interaction will be fought on the battlefields of culture. We must be there with adequate armor. Modern conservatism must turn its human face toward America for the good of us all. Only then will we remain mankind's hope.

—Leopold Tyrmand

Liberal Culture

Timely Reminder from the Beyond

We are witnessing a spurt of general interest in the messages of the recently deceased Supreme Court Justice, William O. Douglas. His last book, *The Court Years: 1939-1975,* hit the book stores last year. Justice Douglas's oft-cited credo was: "to keep the government off the backs of the people." It sounds like a conservative principle, very much our own. Yet Mr. Douglas was routinely described by others, as well as himself, as a flaming liberal.

So, whose declaration of faith is this statement about the government and people's backs? After all, there must be *some* difference between *them* and *us,* right?

Well, we're sorry to have to insist, but it looks to us as if Justice Douglas firmly believed that *his* sitting on people's backs was a tremendous service to the people. He even called his beliefs a philosophy of decency. We do not share his sense of decency. *This* is the difference. □

Publishing in America

New York magazine offers a bit of introspection into the publishing industry's quandary:

> Already seven months overdue on a novel owed Simon & Schuster, Sally Quinn is taking a leave from the Washington *Post* next month to concentrate on her fiction . . . a 'Washington love story' . . .

Who is Ms. Sally Quinn? According to our recognition she's an illiterate who works on the *Washington Post* staff. This is not really a conflicting situation, as working for an influential liberal daily in America does not require the ability to construct a coherent sentence or even a logical thought. However, writing a novel—even a love story, for which Ms. Quinn may be able to demonstrate an empirically founded expertise—that's another matter. Of course, it could be dictated to someone who *has* mastered the art of grammatically putting together words. In general, it must be acknowledged that Simon & Schuster is trapped: no one can sue an illiterate for not delivering a novel. Ms. Quinn might have had a poor childhood, or a traumatic experience with wealth, and both are legitimate excuses for illiteracy. □

Romeo—We Need You!

Shakespeare's work has been put to many uses over the years, and it is currently playing a somewhat unusual role: the balcony scene from *Romeo and Juliet* is being used by the Norwegian Health Department in television ads as a part of a campaign against VD and unwanted pregnancies. After Romeo mounts the balcony, the message "If you love somebody—take precautions" appears on the screen.

In America, where the functional illiteracy rate of high-school graduates is rising at a seemingly inexorable rate, this ad probably wouldn't work. Although the typical teen-ager knows that a Romeo is a lover, he might be confused by the costumes and the setting. After all, men in tights are either rock performers or homosexuals, and balconies are places from which to throw empty beer bottles.

An additional trouble might be to explain the words *love* and *precautions.* (GSV) □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

From Robespierre with Love

Bertram Gross: *Friendly Fascism: The New Face of Power in America;* M. Evans & Co.; New York.

Richard Lingeman: *Small Town America: A Narrative History, 1620—The Present;* G. P. Putnam's Sons; New York.

by James J. Thompson, Jr.

American leftists had best ponder an old saying that still makes the rounds among God-fearing folks: "Be careful what you pray for; the Good Lord may just give it to you." Back in the 1890's the American Left—ranging from mild-mannered liberals to fire-breathing socialists—began to beseech the Powers Above to bestow upon us a federal government that would check the abuses of powerful corporations, foster the growth of labor unions, direct the citizenry in the ways of righteousness and at last lead us into the promised land of justice and material abundance for all. Presidents Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson seated America at the banquet table and served the appetizers; Franklin Roosevelt spread a sumptuous main course; and Lyndon Johnson bore in a dessert tray laden with every delicacy imaginable. Surely the Lord had answered the prayers of America's tireless left-wing reformers.

By the late 1960's American leftists could look back over a half-century of progressive innovation and social engineering sponsored by an ever-beneficent federal government. But alas, unhappiness and discontent and, yes, even gloom began to permeate the ranks of the left. Something had gone awry. The dirty little secret had become too obvious to ignore: big government had not cured all our ills. Even worse, it had piled new problems upon the half-solved and unsolved ones that already existed. What in the world were right-thinking reformers to do?

With no immediate way out of this impasse in sight, some leftists turned to the self-flagellation they engage in when not flaying right-wing miscreants. The mounting self-doubt of the 1970's has now emerged in full panoply. Bertram Gross's *Friendly Fascism* and Richard Lingeman's *Small Town America* both attest to the growing concern of the left with the massive centralization of power in Washington, D.C. Gross has served the masters of aggrandizement well since the 1940's; over the course of a long career he has advised Presidents on economic policy and has lent a hand to the drafting of such bills as the Employment Act of 1946. In *Friendly Fascism* he wails *"mea culpa":* "For many years I sought solutions for America's ills—particularly unemployment, ill health, and slums—through more power in the hands of central government . . . It has taken me a long time to concede that I (and my colleagues) have often been a large part of the new Leviathan's entourage. In any case, I no longer am."

Richard Lingeman, executive editor of *The Nation,* offers no such recantation, but in *Small Town America* he looks with ambivalent admiration toward a segment of America not often praised in the salons of New York City: he has rediscovered the virtues of the small town. As more and more power has accrued to the federal government, small towns have suffered accordingly. Lingeman seems eager to reverse that trend, for he appreciates the small town's "potential for community—for direct, caring, face-to-face interaction of people" who direct their own lives without the heavy yoke of Washington upon their backs.

What do we have here? Are we about to witness a mass exodus from the left? Anyone even faintly familiar with the passionate faith of the leftist True Believer knows that even to pose such a question is to risk being labeled a lunatic. No, Gross and Lingeman have not found the light; they remain men of the left. For all of Richard Lingeman's belief in the promise of small-town life and his wistful nostalgia for his own boyhood years in Crawfordsville, Indiana, he reviles the small town as historically the bastion of tight-fisted businessmen, lackluster political hacks, prune-faced puritans and sharp-tongued gossips; "mean-spirited negativism, bigotry, and nativism" have flourished behind those white picket fences. Lingeman follows a classic pattern: small-town boy goes to big city (New York, in this case), becomes a deracinated urban sophisticate, and blasts the home folks for their narrow-mindedness. And Gross? He longs to slay the Great Beast of Big Business, eviscerate the strength of a warmongering federal government and return America to the "people," those long-suffering masses yearning to be free. Lingeman and Gross need not fear that they have violated the sacred canons of the left: Jane Fonda and Ramsay Clark will still come to their cocktail parties.

But the American right has its sacred canons as well, and if the first is "Thou shalt assail Big Government," surely the second reads: "Thou shalt speak no ill of corporations." Most conservatives will love Bertram Gross's animadversions on the iniquities of the federal

Dr. Thompson is professor of history at The College of William and Mary.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

government, but they will reject out of hand his criticisms of corporate power. In doing so, they supply the left with one of its most compelling arguments for destroying capitalism altogether.

The conservative, above all of his compatriots, should possess an acute awareness of the sinful nature of man, of the fallen condition of humankind that leads men into the paths of evil, where they exploit the weak and give free reign to the darkest urges of their perverted wills. The best-intentioned of men find the seductive lure of money and power difficult to resist. Should one marvel, then, that corporations harbor their fair share of those who readily use their positions to the detriment of their countrymen? Too often, conservatives espy only the evil that emanates from those buildings hunkered down on the banks of the Potomac River. Conservatives have wisely warned Americans of the abuses perpetrated by anonymous bureaucrats who regulate people's lives from deep within the bowels of such agencies as the Internal Revenue Service and the Department of Health and Human Resources. Loving as they do Edmund Burke's "little platoon" of society, conservatives naturally despise and fear the aggrandizement of power that has occurred in Washington over the course of the 20th century. But how can those same men and women ignore the power that has come to reside in the board rooms of mammoth corporations?

As one schooled in the ways of the agrarian traditionalism of Donald Davidson and Andrew Lytle, I need no Bertram Gross or Richard Lingeman to remind me of the shortcomings of big business. National corporations have eroded the independence of the small town and drawn it into the web of a standardized economy. Chain stores have undercut the local merchant and driven small grocery stores and restaurants out of business. Factories that sprang from the energetic hands of local entrepreneurs have long since fallen prey to absentee ownership; the boss who knew his men by their first names has given way to the imported manager who rivets his eyes on the profit margin and hastens to the dictates of a distant headquarters. Corporations sponsor the television programs that nightly inundate America's homes with moral decay and spiritual sickness. Sex sells, so advertising copywriters fill magazines with salacious appeals designed to glue the consumer's loyalty to a given product. Beset by the advances of agribusiness, farmers forsake family homesteads, thus breaking the long chain of rural continuity. On an international scale, transnational corporations conduct their own foreign policies and seek business with nations sworn to destroy the United States.

I am genuinely perplexed as to what to do about all this, but not Bertram Gross; he has a solution ready at hand: "decentralization," that magic incantation that springs quickly to the lips of every half-baked leftist in America these days. I have noticed, however, that when the newly converted proponents of smallness shift from an analysis of present realities to a consideration of future prospects they lapse into a rhetoric compounded of equal parts vague generalization and glib vaticination. Gross, for example, falls back upon the time-honored leftist worship of the masses. Gross's future contains a society where "economically, socially, culturally, and politically the people of . . . America would be able to take part—more directly than ever before—in decisions affecting themselves and others and our nation's role in the world." I shudder at Gross's vision, for he lusts after a mass democracy in which every facet of life would be politicized, and we would whirl about in a continuous orgy of activism and agitation. America would be transformed into a land of 220 million Ralph Naders intent upon scrutinizing one another—and themselves—to spy out the slightest deviation from democratic orthodoxy. Gross may have forsaken his belief in the magic of big government, but his Rousseauian faith in the natural goodness of humanity remains undaunted.

Those who sing paeans to participatory democracy have not, I suspect, thought through the ideas very carefully. Decentralization serves these people ultimately as little more than a code word for their true aim: the destruction of American capitalism. Most Americans do not want this to occur, and they certainly have no desire to politicize every aspect of their daily lives. But if they did engage in participatory democracy they would spring a surprise or two on Bertram Gross. Had the proposition to bomb North Vietnam back into the Stone Age been put on the ballot in the late 1960's, the electorate would most likely have responded with a resounding "yea." And what would the voters do with court-ordered busing to achieve racial balance? Indeed, the Supreme Court, the source of this and so much of that "enlightened" reform so dear to the hearts of the Bertram Grosses of this nation, would probably be voted into oblivion. Gross had best venture across the Hudson River and perambulate about the hinterlands before he further lauds the virtues of the demo-

"*Friendly Fascism* is less trendy than timely."
—*Village Voice*

"There certainly are enough indications today . . . to warrant taking seriously Gross's scenario for tomorrow."
—*The New Republic*

"[Richard Lingeman] has done it so conscientiously and thoroughly that nobody else will attempt a similar book . . . His prose starts to sing."
—*New York Times Book Review*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cratic masses.

Deep in the hearts of Gross and Lingeman lurks a fierce desire to destroy American capitalism and to restructure the economy to suit the tastes of the editorial staff of *The Nation.* With big business out of the way "Friendly Fascism" would no longer threaten, and the federal government, now stripped of its war-making capacity, could turn its full attention to the enforcement of the most cherished social policies of the left. Then we could get down to the serious business of re-establishing Robespierre's "Republic of Virtue."

Given this prospect, I shall keep the disease and forego the cure. But the nostrums pandered by the left find takers in part because of the blind adulation that too many conservatives render to large corporations. If we wish to preserve the freedom under which capitalism thrives, we must weed our own gardens and prune our own hedges. Transnational corporations must be convinced that America's interests, not theirs, come first. Small businesses must be protected and encouraged, and family farms saved from extinction. The moral decay fostered by corporations that advertise in *Hustler* magazine and cash in on sick faddishness must be reversed. Capitalism's—and socialism's—obsession with "economic man" must be countered with an infusion of spiritual values. Capitalism brings material abundance and strives to preserve man's freedom of choice, but it also creates its own problems. Thoughtful conservatives had best turn their attention to the less pleasant side of capitalism, lest their opponents on the left parlay a biting critique of American society into a rise to dominance that will destroy the Republic. The challenge to conservatives is great, but the stakes are even greater. □

In Defense of Infamy

Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman: *The Political Economy of Human Rights, Volume I—The Washington Connection and Third World Fascism; Volume II—After the Cataclysm: Postwar Indochina and the Reconstruction of Imperial Ideology;* South End Press; Boston.

by Alan J. Levine

Noam Chomsky, the renowned authority on linguistics, and his collaborator, Edward Herman, have tried to build a life raft for the shrinking group of antiwar activists and leftists who continue to insist that virtually all the evils of the world are the fault of the Western democratic countries and the United States in particular. But this craft is so poorly built that it sinks of its own accord.

Chomsky and Herman also attempt to do a number of related things: First, to show that the United States is responsible for despotism and poverty in the so-called Third World because of a "neo-colonial system of client states ruled mainly by terror and serving the interests of a small local and foreign business and military elite." Second, to attack the Carter administration's human-rights policy from the left, "exposing" it as a screen behind which to hide Western (including Israeli) "imperialism." Third, to show that things aren't all that bad in Indochina and to patch the holes in the propaganda structure built by the most extreme opponents of the Indochina war—a group in which Chomsky and Herman were very prominent. The result is a farrago of absurd accusations and double talk written in a nagging and querulous tone which frequently degenerates into pompous ranting. False historical analogies are frequently invoked (see, particularly, the second chapter of Volume II). It takes a good deal of crust, too, to suggest that the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* have been steadfast apologists for American policy in Indochina.

One of the big dilemmas of American foreign policy has been the authoritarian, and occasionally vicious, nature of some of the regimes allied to us in the Cold War. The human-rights policy of the Carter administration has, to some extent, been an extremely clumsy attempt to deal with this problem. To most observers it has been apparent that the administration has preferred to bully, only occasionally with success, the weak tinhorn dictators who are friendly to us, while ignoring much worse crimes committed by communist or neutral regimes. The bizarre worldview of Ambassador Andrew Young was but an extreme version of this attitude.

Chomsky and Herman, however, prefer to ignore most of Carter's actual policy and concentrate on the relatively few gestures launched against our enemies. The human-rights policy, they argue, merely disguises the American *creation* of dictatorships, especially in Latin America. "Since 1960, over 18 Latin American regimes have been subjected to military takeovers"; "U.S. influence has been crucial in this process," we are told. One would imagine from their account that civilian democracy has been the characteristic form of government in Latin America. As everyone knows, of course, military dictatorship has predominated since the area was "liberated" from Spain and Portugal. In a typical corruption of language they mislabel the Latin American authoritarian regime as "fascist" or "subfascist"—the latter term coined to describe a regime allegedly having the negative features of fascism but lacking the popular support fascism usually requires. So much for the real world, where the fascist form of totalitarian-

Dr. Levine is an historian who lives in New York.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ism was blasted out of existence in 1945.

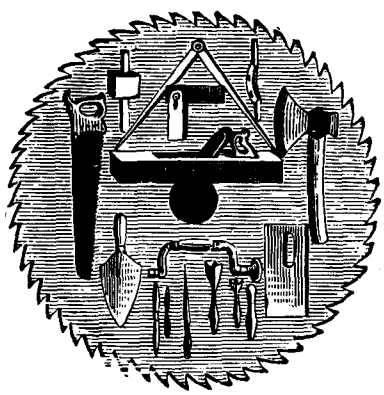
Moreover, the authors claim, American investment and aid in Latin America and the high economic growth fostered by regimes like that in Brazil actually impoverish people—evidently by an economic process so arcane that it cannot be explained. One wonders why Canada has not been ruined by the huge concentration of American foreign investments. (In their explanation of Latin America's troubles, Chomsky and Herman manage to avoid mentioning its rapid population increase, which indeed manages to neutralize much of its economic growth.) Latin America is described in a quite undifferentiated manner and is assimilated into the "Third World," African and Asian underdeveloped lands. Rather carelessly, Chomsky and Herman discuss Argentina in this context and manage to blame its troubles on the United States. Argentina, a basically rich nation which, two generations ago, was about to catch up with the most advanced countries, *became* underdeveloped thanks to the economic cretins it chose as leaders—mostly anti-American cretins, as it happens. The vicious treatment of the Indians of Paraguay and Brazil is blamed on the Americans too—by "guilt through association." Any American aid whatever seems to constitute a seal of approval for a Latin American regime—which, of course, does not stop them from demanding American aid for Indochina. In dealing with the Allende regime and terrorists like the Uruguayan Tupamaros, Chomsky and Herman apply thick coats of whitewash. "Terrorism" is just another of the "many symbols used to frighten and manipulate the populace of the democratic states," an example of "brainwashing under freedom."

With even greater enthusiasm, however, Chomsky and Herman polish the tarnished myths of the Indochina war and defend the new communist regimes. The amount of straddling required to defend both the Vietnamese and Pol Pot regimes would give most leftists ideological hernias, but Chomsky and Herman rise—or rather, descend—to the occasion. They even manage to insinuate that the Western press is responsible for the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia!

"Chomsky *is* our contemporary Orwell. And not even Swift could surpass the savage indignation of *The Political Economy of Human Rights.*"

—Village Voice

All of the old myths of the war are trotted out again. Yet again the unwary reader is informed that the United States steadily supported French colonialism from 1945, though in fact the Americans aided France only after it promised independence to the Indochina states in 1950. The outbreak of the second Indochina war is blamed on anticommunist violations of the Geneva conference agreements and the failure to hold a free election. As usual, the Franco-Vietminh armistice that split the country into two zones is confused with the unsigned Final Declaration, which, over American and South Vietnamese protests, promised elections to reunite Vietnam in 1956. (The Declaration did not even obligate the countries that issued it.) Like most antiwar critics, Chomsky and Herman fail to mention that the United States pushed reunification by free elections during the Geneva conference, requiring only that they be run under U.N. supervision rather than having a structure allowing a communist veto. Though the communists are supposed to have been utterly confident of popular support, they adamantly refused this. Once more we are told that the Vietcong were essentially independent of Northern controls—a really absurd argument at this date.



It is characteristic of Chomsky and Herman's sectarian, hysterical attitude that they are particularly harsh in their comments on people, Theodore Draper, for example, who did not share their anti-Americanism and tried to oppose the war on rational grounds. They are even more bitter when noting the remarks of these former doves, who were willing to admit that there was truth on both sides in the dispute over the war, or who have otherwise reconsidered their views.

In dealing with the postwar era in Indochina, however, Chomsky and Herman surpass themselves. The evacuation of Vietnamese children becomes a "most cynical example of atrocity management," though the authors have no compunction about detailing fantastic stories about Israeli atrocities against Arabs. The flight of the boat people is dismissed. The authors prate about the lack of corruption under the new regime, ignoring the well-established practice of "squeezing" funds from those who take to the sea. The remarks of Nguyen Cong Hoan (a former South Vietnamese peace advocate) that there are 200,000 political prisoners in the conquered South are wished away. The assurances supplied by people on guided tours is considered infinitely more reliable than such testimony.

Chomsky and Herman reach rock bottom in their treatment of Cambodia. Cambodian atrocities are allegedly being used to "whitewash Western imperial-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ism," so they deem it ideologically necessary to whitewash the vilest regime in the world. In reality, of course, many have managed to shift part of the blame for the Cambodian horrors onto the United States. In claiming that Cambodia was forced into the war by American actions in its border region—rather than because of the stationing of North Vietnamese troops there—Chomsky and Herman merely repeat a popular myth. And not even the crustiest reactionaries in the West have noted the fact that Cambodia was better off under the rule of France (the harshest European imperial power in Asia) than during its brief existence as an independent state.

Since 1977 it has generally been accepted that well over a million people were butchered by the Khmer Rouge after their victory in 1975. The testimony of the refugees from Cambodia is quite consistent in its portrait of the regime—one that made nazi Germany look like a republic of free men. While Hitler, Stalin and Mao murdered more people, Pol Pot and his followers undoubtedly went farther than anyone else in their attempt to realize the totalitarian ideal. They mashed the Cambodian people into an undifferentiated pulp and regimented the survivors into an utterly joyless existence. The facts have been well documented by Francois Ponchaud, John Barron and Anthony Paul. But Chomsky and Herman prefer to portray the Khmer Rouge as generally humanistic chaps, economic rationalizers who admittedly committed some excesses in understandable revenge, but who saved the Cambodian people from starving. They consume 160 pages in quibbling, devious reasoning and hasty accusations of fabrication of evidence. They think it unreasonable to put faith in the reports of refugees, but accept the testimony of those who have been on guided tours provided by the Khmer Rouge regime.

It may be recalled that Western reporters visiting the Ukraine in the 1930's on similar guided tours were totally unaware that the area was suffering from an artificial famine caused by Stalin's collectivization program. Their ignorance may have been excusable; the willful blindness and dishonesty of Chomsky and Herman is not. □

Of Morals & Manners

Ian Watt: *Conrad in the Nineteenth Century;* University of California Press; Berkeley, California.

Millicent Bell: *Marquand: An American Life;* Little, Brown & Co.; Boston.

by Stephen L. Tanner

Conrad and Marquand present an interesting study in contrasts. Both were successful writers, but in quite different ways. Marquand was the middlebrow master. During the first decade of his career, between 1921 and 1931, he published five serials and 59 short stories in the *Saturday Evening Post,* the *Ladies' Home Journal* and *Collier's.* The *Post* paid him $500 to $3,000 for stories and $30,000 to $40,000 for serials. He went on to become the most widely read and financially successful novelist of his time—the professional of professionals.

Conrad, on the other hand, the darling of the intelligentsia, spent the first decade of his career, and then some, plagued with money worries and burdened with debt. He later achieved some measure of financial security, but his success is more aptly measured by the fame and respect he earned as a serious literary artist.

Both writers confronted the dilemma posed by the deepening chasm between the highbrow and the mass audience, but they responded in opposite ways. Marquand fretted about the way his writing for the popular audience interfered with his development as a serious artist, but he never wholeheartedly turned away from the desire for commercial success. He was "violently anxious" (his words) to prove that widely circulating magazine fiction could be both popular and serious. He insisted on several occasions that he was proud of what he had accomplished in writing for the *Post.* His literary agent encouraged him to produce popular and remunerative fiction.

Conrad also began with writing magazine stories and serials, but his agent encouraged him in his belief that a writer must follow his own path and disregard the public taste. According to Ian Watt, Conrad's "fierce independence and ferocious contempt for commercial activities made every concession to the taste of the public stick in his throat."

Writing came easily to Marquand, and he prided himself on his fluent craftsmanship. Conrad speaks of sitting eight hours, writing three sentences, and then erasing them, using all of his self-control to refrain from banging his head on the wall: "I want to howl and foam at the mouth but daren't do it for fear of waking the baby and alarming my wife."

Maxwell Geismar once said, "Mr. Marquand knows all the little answers. He avoids the larger questions." Conrad, of course, attempted the larger questions, and consequently exhibited greater intellectual boldness, moral toughness and depth of insight. The actual society he knew was Marquand's subject, and he valued it for itself, not as a symbol or metaphor for the large human issues. Conrad, on the other hand, could not treat quotidian concreteness without including timeless implications about the fundamental

Dr. Tanner teaches English at Brigham Young University.

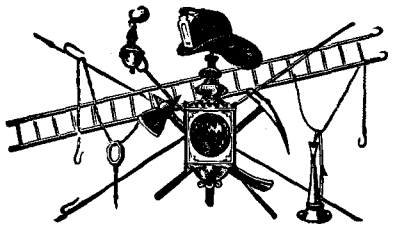
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

questions of man's inner life.

Both writers experienced exclusion and alienation. Marquand had a sense of being unjustly excluded in youth from the elite society of Newburyport and Harvard. Millicent Bell demonstrates that this became the compelling motive of his life. He erected a myth of his own disadvantage that, psychically speaking, became his reality. But in his life and writing this motive scarcely transcends the Cinderella motif: he and his characters dream of coming home the Big Success—they want recognition where they had known exclusion. The note of self-vindication and spite is unmistakable.

Conrad, orphaned at age 11, exiled from his native land, never fully accepted in English society, knew a good deal about loss and alienation. He struggled more painfully than did Marquand to discover his own way of coming to imaginative terms with his experiences, probably because his experiences were more psychologically acute than were Marquand's. The principal difference between their responses to feeling isolated is indicated in Watt's statement that Conrad "knew that his sense of loss was not merely familial, social, and national; alienation was a much more universal condition, and one with deep roots in the romantic imagination, and all the echoing dissonances of his civilization." Marquand rarely perceived such larger connections.

This same difference in perceptions is seen in the way the two authors made use of their travel. Marquand traveled considerably more extensively than did Conrad. He was fascinated by the Orient and returned there several times. But aside from his Mr. Moto novels, he made no real use of this extensive travel. He wrote novels of manners and felt he would have to know a place and its people intimately to write about them. His focus was on surface detail, and he knew the contours of New England society best. Contrast what Conrad did with his exotic settings, particularly



in *Heart of Darkness.*

It is easy to multiply these contrasts. For example, Conrad was confident in his determination to achieve a reputation but feared he would be unable to make money. Marquand knew he could make money but doubted that he would achieve recognition as a serious writer. There is basically little that is new in Marquand's fictional methods, while Conrad is the least derivative of writers: his experiments in method are part of his genius, part of what puts him in the first rank of modern literature.

Despite such contrasts, Marquand and Conrad share the experience of being abused by a modern criticism that fails to do justice to their fiction. This criticism, dominantly formalistic, viewing literature as autonomous, dismisses Marquand's novels because they lack intriguing and sophisticated patterns of images and symbols. And this same criticism applies its subjective and overly ingenious methods to Conrad to produce subtle, elaborate, cryptographic interpretations that distort or ignore the author's ideological commitments.

The kinds of trends which dominate contemporary criticism are indicated in a recent editor's column in PMLA, the organ of the Modern Language Association. A member of the editorial board proposed acceptance of an essay on the basis of "its boldly unconventional approach: 'It does not,' he pointed out, 'contain a single reference to Northrop Frye.' " An earlier editor remarked that at times "it seems that authors feel their articles would not be given serious consideration without a quotation from Frye, preferably in the opening paragraph."

Frye's work is wide-ranging and has been influential in many ways, but he is particularly characteristic of recent criticism in his insistence that "literature has no consistent connection with ordinary life, positive nor negative"; that literature cannot be lifelike—it can only be "literature like"; and that "no work of literature is better by virtue of what it says than any other work."

Such antimimetic notions about literature and the radical aesthetics they have spawned have been perceptively surveyed and criticized by Gerald Graff in *Literature Against Itself* (University of Chicago Press, 1979). Graff argues: "As important as it was for critics to learn that literature and language are systems of humanly created conventions and not simple mirrors or photographic copies, it is now at least as important that we rescue some sense in which these conventions are accountable to something beyond themselves."

Ian Watt's *Conrad in the Nineteenth Century* is a landmark work in that process of rescue. This fine book is as significant for what it says about the nature of modern literature and criticism as it is for what it tells us about Conrad. Watt believes "the modern critical tendency to decompose literary works into a series of more or less cryptic references to a system of non-literal unifying meanings is in large part a misguided response to a very real problem in the interpretation of much modern literature." The problem is that modernism no longer finds in the literal reproduction of actuality, in the system of social mimesis that was a motive impulse for realistic fiction, an adequate means of representation. Not finding in nature itself an adequate subject for expression of artistic intention, the modernist novelist uses it as the raw materials out of which, through method of presentation, distortion and rearrangement, he creates meaning individual to himself. The critic "is faced with the task of explaining to the public in discursive expository prose a literature whose expressive idiom was intended to be inaccessible to exposition in any concep-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tual terms. He confronts an incompleteness of utterance, an indeterminacy of meaning, a seemingly unconscious or random association of images, which simultaneously demand and defy exegesis."

Even clearly recognizing this problem, Watt refuses to accept the aesthetic and symbolist doctrines of the separation of art from life, and he claims for Conrad the same refusal. His interpretations of Conrad's novels include well-developed sections on biographical and historical sources and ideological perspectives. He recommends in interpretation "a primary commitment to the literal imagination" that will enable the reader to see "the larger implications of the particulars which confront him." The symbols will be extended in a "centrifugal" way. "The opposite kind of critical reading starts from an esoteric interpretation of particular objects . . . and combines them into a centripetal and cryptographic interpretation which is based, as in allegory, on a single and defined system of beliefs, and is largely independent of the literal meanings of the details presented and of their narrative context."

In short, Watt refuses to allow criticism to divorce itself from moral and ethical concerns—from what life is like and how it should be lived. This runs contrary to much of modern criticism and, consequently, within the context of recent criticism Watt's approach is radical—even though all he has done is reaffirm, intelligently and persuasively, the common-sense core of the best of traditional literary interpretation.

Watt has the good sense to recognize the good sense in Conrad and thereby rescue him from the cult of irrationality. A constant foil for his interpretations of the novels are the readings that portray Conrad as unremittingly nihilistic in his basic vision of reality. Watt's portrait is of a writer, dedicated to confronting the dark aspects of life without confusing individuality with alienation, who constantly posed the question (as Watt formulates it): "Alienation, of course; but how do we get out of it?" Watt sees Conrad as maneuvering through puzzling realities toward an ethics of "work, duty, and restraint." Peter Keating, in his review of the book, is correct in saying, "To refuse to see the power of affirmation in Conrad is to surrender (as Kurtz surrendered) to irresponsible and self-destructive forces."

With impressive breadth and depth of scholarship, Watt has demonstrated what in the face of much misguided antimimetic critical theory needed demonstration once again: the value of a literary work is determined by more than internal coherence. We can and do judge literature by tests of internal coherence, but we shouldn't stop there. Criticism should involve both intrinsic and extrinsic concerns, and often extrinsic concerns impinge in important ways on intrinsic ones. Recognizing this would not only restore some common sense to the interpretation of a complex and elusive modernist author like Conrad, it would also enable us to appreciate more fully the more modest and quite different achievement of a novelist like Marquand. □

Ineptitude, Mendacity & Ignorance

Ronald Steel: *Walter Lippmann and the American Century;* Little, Brown & Co.; Boston.

by Paul Gottfried

Despite Ronald Steel's secularist sympathies (abundantly evident in his book), the biography that he wrote reminds me of a particular medieval monkish chronicle. Gregory of Touss, in his history of the Frankish kings, set out to show how Providence had favored the Franks ever since one of their chieftains, Clovis, had embraced the Church of Rome. Needless to say, Gregory himself was a Roman Christian and, driven by a desire for a "usable part" (a favorite New Left phrase), depicted the converted Franks as *always* victorious over pagan and heretical enemies starting with Clovis's reign. Like his pious predecessor, Steel attempts to justify the ways of Providence by reconstructing the historical past. But he does so while introducing distinctly modern twists. For divine guidance he substitutes liberal consciousness, or just plain leftish trendiness; instead of exalting Clovis and the Franks, he presents the edifying example of Walter Lippmann and the American intellectual community.

Like most knights of faith, young Lippmann was apparently predisposed to political conversion. Signs of grace could be seen even before he displayed his oracular wisdom by denouncing anticommunism to a younger generation. Before the First World War Lippmann had already begun his move toward socialism; as cofounder of *The New Republic,* he exposed the alleged decrepitude of American capitalism. During the war he urged American intervention on the side of the Allies, taking this hard line because of his firm conviction that a German-Austrian victory would have politically reactionary consequences in Europe. Steel never makes clear exactly why Lippmann broke with the neutralist and pacifist left—and, one might add, with his own German-Jewish background—in declaring his early support for the Allies. He speaks with apparent approval of Lippmann's "severing his ties" with the socialists in 1915 and drifting into the "Wilson camp" soon afterwards, but he offers no plausible explanation as to why such things occurred. The reason, I suspect, is that Steel, although a shrieking anti-

Professor Gottfried teaches history at Rockford College.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

militarist in the face of Soviet and communist aggression, shares Lippmann's naive enthusiasm for "Wilson's war." The German and Austrian Kaisers in 1914 were, after all, less peace-loving than Stalin in 1945—or such is the impression his book seeks to give. Nor does Steel bother to criticize Lippmann's petitioning the Secretary of War for a draft exemption soon after other Americans had begun to bleed and die in a struggle which Lippmann had fervently endorsed. We are simply told that he believed he might better serve his country in a civilian capacity. So much for draft-dodging when committed by a secular saint!

Kenneth Lynn, in a penetrating study of this biography for *Commentary,* describes Steel as an unchanging "historian of the sixties." Viewing the American military-industrial complex as the source of most evils in international affairs, Steel considers the war in Vietnam the ultimate expression of our predatory economy and exploitative government. According to Lynn, the prevalence of this ideological focus affects Steel's scholarship. It prevents him from showing interest in serious biographical questions which a more curious historian would no doubt have addressed, e.g. Lippmann's utter callousness in the 30's toward the victims of Hitler's persecution, his seduction of (and later marriage to) his closest friend's wife and his initial indifference toward nazi tyranny as contrasted with his earlier passionate hostility toward Imperial Germany. Although it may well be impossible to explain fully such apparent failings and inconsistencies, Steel hardly comes to grips with any of them. To him most of the details and intricacies of Lippmann's life are only so many hurdles to get over on his way to condemning the Cold War and to honoring Lippmann as an anti-anticommunist.

Such praise turns ultimately into self-praise, for although advanced in his grasp of reality, Lippmann is never credited with having as much wisdom as his biographer. Although he often opposed the Cold War, he lacked "a philosophical approach or ideological commitment" and was "reluctant to accept the part that economic demands or imperial ambitions might play in explaining foreign policy." Despite the absence of a pop Marxist perspective, Lippmann allegedly stood above the obsessive hysteria of the McCarthyite 50's. For example, we are told:

> While most of the country, including the foreign policy establishment, was behaving as though the Red Army was about to gobble up all of Europe along with half of Asia and Africa, and the Cominform was going to wend its insidious way into the minds and hearts of innocent American children, Lippmann preached restraint and a calculated assessment of national interest.

Since so much of Steel's book is taken up with ranting against anticommunist infidels, it might be worthwhile to speculate on his justification for the endless sermon. His book contains no coherent statement of a Marxist worldview, yet it does suggest his consistent belief that American foreign policy is shaped by our economic system. This economic system, we are led to infer, is advanced capitalism that is already domestically at the crisis stage and which can be maintained only through imperialist adventure abroad. In view of this reality, it is no more productive to chide a capitalist government for being imperialist than to reproach a leopard for being carnivorous. And yet the rigors of an authentic Marxist—or Marxist-Leninist—analysis are really too much for a New Leftist windbag like Steel to accept and, after showing off his Marxist terminology, he lectures capitalists on what he, as a Marxist, must believe are their inescapable vices. Perhaps this is the most bothersome aspect of Steel's book, which typifies an emerging genre of New Left reconstructions of the past. Assuming that one could overlook the turgid prose, repetitive sermons and factual disfigurements, the product is still incoherent—even for a Marxist interpretation of reality. Why should Steel be praising Lippmann for properly grasping America's "national interest"?

An advanced capitalist state's objective interest is supposedly to suppress revolution and to war against weaker states. From a Marxist point of view it was the State Department, not Lippmann, which "made the calculated assessment of national interest." The American government, as an instrument of a bourgeois society locked into a capitalist mode of production, could only respond to predetermined social and material imperatives. To overthrow such a government is historically necessary, but what rationale can a self-proclaimed Marxist find for preaching hellfire and brimstone to capitalist democracies for behaving as they should?

Like so much of today's New Left history, Steel's biography combines ineptitude and mendacity with ignorance even of the ideological position in which it claims to be anchored. A muddled Marxist and a tasteless hagiographer, he participates in modern radicalism's continuing assault on the historian's craft. Despite his many shortcomings Walter Lippmann was a gifted journalist and an occasionally perceptive political analyst. His life and career deserve a better biography than the one Steel has written. Perhaps such a work may yet be produced once the 60's are truly behind us. □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

All in the Family

Todd Gitlin: *The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media in the Making & Unmaking of the New Left;* University of California Press; Berkeley, California.

by Gary S. Vasilash

American journalism, as it's practiced today, has its roots in the nation's junior high schools. There, the budding journalist learns one lesson that is never forgotten and is neglected only at great peril: everyone wants to see his name in print. That's why the school papers are full of gossip and why adult papers aren't far beyond it. This phenomenon is part of the 20th-century state of mind: remember Bloom in *Ulysses* contemplating the misspelling of his name in the newspaper? Joyce recognized the power and pervasiveness of the media; *Finnegan's Wake* is, on one level, constructed by the media.

Some people are satisfied with one properly spelled citation, but others can't see their name often enough. And as this print (and now video) addiction grows, these egotists want to be able to direct the camera angle, rephrase the quote and so on. A few years down the line this will be called "media manipulation." Some hire public-relations firms to do it; some go to other extremes (e.g. kidnapping a newspaper heiress). But the junior-high-schooler is not quite so calculating: it's just that he or she feels ever so self-important and just *knows* that everyone else agrees with the assessment. And woe to the journalist who doesn't. The student will storm and rage and tell the world how the school paper distorts everything. Moreover, he will loose his venom on the individual reporter or editor he feels is responsible for the grievous error. It's obvious, he asserts, that the journalist a) is blind, deaf and dumb; b) has something personal against him; and/or c) is being manipulated by or is a part of a cabal that aims to destroy him.

Mr. Vasilash is associate editor of Manufacturing Engineering *magazine in Detroit.*

In *The Whole World Is Watching* Todd Gitlin sounds like an angry junior-high-schooler. The axe he grinds throughout the book (in prose that rivals some would-be Marxist theoreticians or McLuhanists at their most convoluted) is against the media; for the sake of convenience, the *New York Times* and "CBS News" are set up as victims for his blade. While many might think that those two organizations are in need of a little surgery, it probably isn't for the same reasons Gitlin has. He was a part of the "Movement" in the 60's. Indeed, he was president of Students for a Democratic Society (June 1963 to June 1964), the successor of Jane Fonda's husband (a.k.a. Tom Hayden). In the book SDS is a synecdoche, in a sense, for the "Movement." It's not that SDS was snubbed by the press. No, Gitlin is filled with indignation because the group didn't get the kind of coverage he knows it should have had. He was there, he tells the reader on a number of occasions: he *knows* what should have been said and how it should have been reported. And if he wasn't there, or isn't too sure about something, he doesn't let that get in the way:

> Therefore, the scarcity of hard-and-fast evidence . . . cannot be taken as conclusive disproof of the hypotheses . . . We have no evidence that Johnson directly attempted to manage news of the antiwar movement. But . . .

And so on, throughout. Rules of evidence straight out of *Alice in Wonderland* for the man who bewails the lack of media objectivity.

Before looking at Gitlin's charges and the fanciful way in which he expresses them, a bit of history of SDS is in order. A history of the organization, titled *SDS* (Random House, 1973), was written by Kirkpatrick Sale, seemingly a patron saint of Gitlin. (Gitlin describes Sale, circa 1968, as "one of the editors of the *New York Times Magazine* and the one most sympathetic to SDS." In the first chapter of *SDS,* Sale expresses a high opinion of Gitlin, listing him along with others who are in Sale's view "some of the best of the generation": Tom Hayden, Rennie Davis, Marge Piercy and Bernardine Dohrn. Quite a crew.) SDS had quite a colorful family tree—*had* because it rotted from within and managed to blow itself up. According to Sale, the taproot of SDS is the Intercollegiate Socialist Society, which was formed by Upton Sinclair and associates including Jack London and Clarence Darrow in 1905. In 1921 it became the League for Industrial Democracy, since leading members thought *socialist* sounded too radical. LID formed a Student League for Industrial Democracy in 1928. It was a socialist group, and it lost a communist faction in 1931, the New York Student League, which subsequently became the National Student League (1932). In 1935 SLID and NSL joined and became the American Student Union. It folded in 1941. LID had been hanging on. It restarted SLID in 1945, which became SDS in January 1960. The title, it seems, was picked for cosmetic purposes. Like its predecessors, this group was torn by divisions. Members were incapable of deciding whether they were going to be communists or socialists and which causes they would espouse. The United Auto Workers got SDS on its feet with a $10,000 grant in 1960 and provided other monies later. Civil rights was the first SDS cause. It provided good visibility. Like its predecessors, SDS became factionalized, which Gitlin blames on the media, which distorted the problems and was

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

otherwise generally uncooperative.

That point (the fact that journalists aren't very sharp) is stressed throughout the book. First Gitlin asserts, "the archetypical news story is a crime story, and an opposition movement is ordinarily, routinely, and unthinkingly treated as a sort of crime." Thinking is out because: "Extending the news story would entail hard and unaccustomed work, outside normal newsgathering routines, going beyond the given scene, the given press conference, and the given press release." He later points out that "most *Times* reporters learn the news-reporting trade on a police beat, where they can rely on the police to dig up 'the facts' and, actually, to decree just what constitutes a relevant fact." In the seemingly rare cases where thought can be detected, "Reporters covering the same event find it convenient to borrow angles, issues, and questions from each other." I suppose this only happens when a police officer isn't available.

However, if all reporters are so dumb, the idea that newspeople had something personal against SDS would seem to be difficult to prove. After all, who would believe that those pathetic scribblers, those veritable sheep, could have something personal against anything? But Gitlin indicates that they could be brighter if they only tried. Therefore, since they didn't try, he says:

> The editors and reporters . . . are generally upper-middle-class in origin, and although their personal values may be liberal by the conventional nomenclature of American politics, they tend to share the *core* hegemonic assumptions of their class: that is, of their managers as well as their major sources. Their salaries are handsome (in 1976, CBS News paid its correspondents between $35,000 and $80,000 a year, not counting fringe benefits and perquisites), and they share tastes and vacation spots and circulate at dinner parties with many of their sources.

To give more support to the idea that there was personal vindictiveness involved, Gitlin points out some reporters who were infinitely more noble and forthright than the average human being, reporters who could dig up the facts all by themselves, or at least take them wholesale from people like Daniel Ellsberg, thief of the Pentagon Papers and source for Gitlin. Consider Fred Powledge, formerly of the *Times.* In March 1965 a background story by Powledge on the student left ran in the *Times.* Gitlin describes the story, then says: "All in all, the Powledge piece derived its information from within the radical student orbit, and conveyed respect and a certain distanced sympathy." Later Gitlin presents "CBS News" correspondent Alexander Kendrick: "Like Fred Powledge of the *Times,* Kendrick himself was sympathetic to the New Left, and unusually well-informed." Kendrick did pro-SDS pieces. Then there is Stanhope Gould of CBS, "a young, long-haired, brash, inventive field reporter," whom Gitlin quotes as saying, " 'I was sympathetic, I wasn't that old myself.' " I wonder if SDS supplied these gentlemen with handkerchiefs with the party line sewn sampler-like across them? These media personnel are touted as being quite sharp. After praising Gould on one page, Gitlin blasts Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, "longtime Communist hunters," on the next, because they, "As usual . . . did not cushion the force of their exposé [which said SDS was organizing a national antidraft campaign in 1965] by asking SDS to confirm or deny their story, or by asking for any comment whatsoever." You can be sure that Powledge, Kendrick and Gould would have asked. To say nothing of Daniel Schorr, who supplied not only a blurb for the dust jacket, but also additional tidbits to Gitlin. Did Schorr ask permission of the House Select Intelligence Committee before he sold its secret report to *The Village Voice?*

Finally, the cabal theory. Gitlin does make some perceptive points about the power of the media with regard to helping form the views and opinions of its readers and auditors. (Which leads me to wonder: had the media not recognized SDS, would it have lasted as long as it did?) Gitlin turns to Antonio Gramsci, an Italian communist of the earlier part of this century, for many of his terms and concepts, a seemingly chic thing to do. That is, it will send some to their reference books to check on Gramsci, and others will just be suitably impressed with Gitlin's erudition, which will add immeasurably to his radical cachet. It should be noted that Gitlin makes the book appear to be a scholarly text: many footnotes, subheads, references to other parts of the book, etc. I suspect that one reason for this approach is that such a gimmick will aid the marketing of the book as a college text. And besides that, it, as in the case of books like *Chariots of the Gods,* must look learned so as to achieve sure-fire plausibility with those who don't know any better.

Gitlin describes Gramsci's "core conception": "those who rule the dominant institutions secure their power in large measure directly *and indirectly,* by impressing their definitions of the situation upon those they rule and, if not usurping the whole ideological space, still significantly limiting what is thought throughout society." Those who rule, in this case, of course, are a

"I would propose that SDS was the glory of the American sixties."
—Carl Oglesby
Inquiry

". . . the perspective is essentially correct . . ."
—*Nation*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

part of the "State," which has "an oligopolized, privately controlled corporate economy." This corporate command has an "intimate ally, the bureaucratic national security state."

Journalists—but not the sympathetic ones, I assume—are tools of the State. They work within structures called "frames": "principles of selection, emphasis, and presentation composed of little tacit theories about what exists, what happens, and what matters." Frames are constructed by "political and economic elites" who at times "intervene directly in journalistic routine, attempting to keep journalists within harness." But in most cases, "Simply by doing their jobs, journalists tend to serve the political and economic elite definitions of reality." That's because they are "socialized from childhood, and then trained, recruited, assigned, edited, rewarded, and promoted on the job . . ." Yes, Gitlin is writing about contemporary American journalists, not animals being raised and trained by a Skinnerian.

All *The Whole World is Watching* amounts to (ignoring, for a moment, the late-show horror movie aspect) is nothing more than a turgid and tedious restatement of the Marxist line about how the observer is conditioned by his economic status and cannot see things as they really are—unless, of course, he happens to be a Marxist, in which case everything is pellucid. The reporters could not, would not, accept the SDS view of society which Gitlin insists —with all the self-righteousness of a junior-high-schooler—they should have. The journalists' sins are manifold. They include: not paying attention to the fledgling SDS; paying attention but not to the right things; not talking to SDS personnel; making celebrities out of SDS personnel. At best, in Gitlin's view, the journalists mollified the Movement, particularly after the Tet offensive in 1968. This, he says, resulted from the elite's going antiwar. However, it appears more clear (but not from Gitlin's book) that the media didn't just mollify the radicals, but, in many cases, worked to mollycoddle them. □

FDR and His Iago

Michael R. Beschloss: *Kennedy and Roosevelt: The Uneasy Alliance;* W. W. Norton & Co.; New York.

by Otto J. Scott

Patrick Kennedy, his father, rose from saloonkeeper to ward boss in East Boston, to state representative and senator, an insider in the powerful Massachusetts Irish-Democratic machine, a successful businessman who considered Honey Fitz "an insufferable clown." He sent young Joseph Kennedy to parochial school for the elementary grades, but later to Boston Latin and Harvard. At Boston Latin, Joseph was captain of the baseball team, manager of the basketball team, class president. These activities impeded his scholarship: he had to stay an extra year to graduate. At Harvard he was an indifferent student but an active athlete. He was elected to Hasty Pudding, and admitted (late) to Delta Upsilon. During the summers he led sightseeing tours and made large amounts of extra money. Later he married Rose, the daughter of Honey Fitz. The ceremony was performed by Cardinal O'Connor.

In 1917 he was assistant manager of the Fore River shipyard: he considered it a good way to meet "people like the Saltonstalls." The yard was expanding under Charley Schwab, head of Bethlehem Steel, who was impressed by young Joseph Kennedy. Schwab instructed Kennedy to go to Washington and tell Assistant Secretary of the Navy Franklin D. Roosevelt that the yard would not release some completed Argentine naval vessels until the Argentines paid their bill. The tall, arrogant Roosevelt greeted the information with smiling scorn. If the ships were not released, he told Kennedy, he would send some sailors and tugs to Fore River and release the ships by governmental force. Kennedy did not believe him: he reported to Schwab that Roosevelt was "a smiling four-flusher." Not long afterward the tugs and sailors arrived. Naval rifles and bayonets guarded Argentine crews, who boarded the vessels. That was the first encounter between Joe Kennedy and Franklin Roosevelt, and it set a pattern that was to mark all their later interactions. In these Kennedy was always conscious of economic matters and Roosevelt always conscious of the realities of governmental power.

This anecdote and many more are provided by Beschloss in a book he developed from an undergraduate thesis. There is a foreword by Roosevelt-idolater James MacGregor Burns and there are interviews with Roosevelt-Kennedy propagandist Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., professional Roosevelt-follower Joseph P. Lash and a covey of other deeply committed Democratic academics, journalists and drum-beaters. The recruitment of Michael R. Beschloss to these ranks must be considered the beginning of the second generation of Rooseveltian historicism. This genre is devoted to excusing all that was done in the name of progress under Roosevelt, similar in manner to the hagiography created around Woodrow Wilson.

Much as Wilson is forgiven for betraying the big-city bosses who helped him climb, Roosevelt is apt to be forgiven for his tendency to demean his servitors. To take this attitude toward Roosevelt's behavior with Joe Kennedy fits, of course, both this fashion and contemporary morals. Joe Kennedy is not regarded as an admirable figure; anything done to him was well worth doing—or so it is assumed. *Kennedy*

Mr. Scott, a frequent contributor to these pages, is researching a book on the Wilson period.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and Roosevelt, however, is a more-than-ordinarily cynical book. It portrays neither the President nor his instrument as having been men of any particular honor, principle or even pretense. They met to take advantage of each other and they both succeeded. In the course of their long collaboration they served to both epitomize and symbolize the degradation of the democratic dogma in the United States. Mr. Beschloss, being young and somewhat humorless, has done almost too well in his attempt to prove that fame is the greatest reward, that power is worth any price, and that in his pursuit of these goals Franklin Roosevelt was far more clever and subtle, perceptive and daring than Joseph P. Kennedy. Yet in this narrative of the patrician and the parvenu the remarkable typicalness of both men is worth a more serious look. Kennedy opened Wall Street's coffers to Roosevelt in his first campaign; he helped to line up Irish-Catholic big-city bosses in subsequent efforts. Roosevelt made Kennedy head of the first SEC ("Set a thief to catch a thief," he said, while his sycophants slapped their knees), and later made Kennedy Ambassador to Great Britain.

The two men were especially close during the years between 1932 and 1936. Roosevelt often visited Kennedy's rented estate in Virginia, or had the Kennedy family as guests of the White House. Kennedy responded like Iago: he sounded boldly but cringed when the whistle blew. Roosevelt never seems to have liked Kennedy—but then Eleanor (who detested the Bostonian) said she could never grow accustomed to her husband's "lack of real attachment to people." Other persons could not compete with Roosevelt's self-infatuation; he lived as if before a mirror. The essence of the Roosevelt-Kennedy relationship, according to Beschloss, was that Roosevelt was socially secure all his life, while Kennedy was socially insecure. There seems to be a great deal of truth to this assessment: Roosevelt was an aristocrat in his own eyes, though that assumption is always slightly ridiculous in a republic. When Roosevelt attended a London dinner with Winston Churchill in 1918, he was stunned to be subjected to his own sort of condescension from a son of the Duke of Marlborough: he never really forgave Churchill for the lesson. The fact was that Roosevelt was a snob who liked to lord it over all whom he could impress. And Kennedy was a self-conscious Irish-Catholic at a time when they were held in contempt by the established, self-secure Protestant ruling class. That the Roosevelt-Kennedy contest was uneven from the start was due as much to their complementary weaknesses as to any other factor.

"... this well-researched work reveals the complex motives and values at work among men exercising power at the highest level."
—*Publishers Weekly*

Kennedy swallowed his resentment and his pride on innumerable occasions in order to curry favor and to achieve outward honor and prestige. This behavior was the norm in the Roosevelt court: subservience marked all the Roosevelt courtiers, whose descendants must wince as they read the historical record. The differences between Roosevelt and Kennedy did not become important to the world until the rise of Hitler in 1937 and Kennedy's appointment as Ambassador to Britain. In this post he was, at first, a great success, for his ideas coincided with those of Neville Chamberlain and the Conservative Party. That party, as history well knows, was led by Chamberlain into a policy of sacrificing Czechoslovakia to Hitler. But the path toward Munich, as Telford Taylor makes clear, was not paved by British Conservatives alone. The British Labour Party and its left-leaning liberals were ardent pacifists up to the edge of the Second World War, and they were adamantly against Britain's arming at a time when it would have been sensible to do so. There is, in other words, enough blame to go around regarding the rise of Hitler. Not a single group, *without exception,* failed to be hoodwinked by the dictator. Nevertheless, Joe Kennedy retained his illusions longer than most. He thought Munich was a triumph (as did most Americans, Britons, Frenchmen, Italians and Germans at the time). But as the true nature of Europe's peril loomed beyond argument, the lifelong selfishness of Kennedy's nature became increasingly evident. Money was paramount to Kennedy; his family came next. Then—a long drop down—came the rest of the world. Nowhere does Beschloss record that Kennedy ever expressed the slightest pity for any of Hitler's victims: neither the Jews nor the British, French, Czechs or Poles. Nor—ultimately—Americans, Russians or Eastern Europeans. Kennedy argued that American trade would be disrupted by a war. He argued that Britain would not repay its loans. He argued that Europe's wars were none of America's business—and an isolationist and culturally backward nation largely agreed with him.

Mr. Roosevelt thought otherwise—and there lies his only enduring claim to greatness. He was well-informed regarding his ambassador's isolationist arguments around London and to various newspapermen back home: Roosevelt believed in wiretaps, surveillance and mail drops. But as the division between the two men grew wider, FDR chose to keep Kennedy in London rather than to bring him home to lead an Irish-Catholic disaffection. On the eve of his third term he ordered Kennedy to come straight from the airport to the White House and there put on a grand show. With Rose Kennedy pleading his case, FDR held a family hour for the clan. A private family dinner and warm promises turned the ambassador around. Kennedy went on the radio to promote Roosevelt for a third term, in response to Roosevelt's promises of future politi-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cal plums. Having achieved this turnaround, FDR promptly dropped Kennedy. After the United States was propelled into war by Japan and Hitler, Kennedy was ignored until the beginning of Roosevelt's fourth term. Then Roosevelt put on his charm for the last time, and for the last time Kennedy capitulated.

That is the outline of Beschloss's tale. It is well documented and studded with illustrious names. Mr. Krock of the *New York Times* was gulled by Kennedy; Henry and Clare Luce were courted, Lindbergh found agreement for a time; so did Father Coughlin. Big-city bosses—Buckley in the Bronx, Daly in Chicago, O'Connell in Albany—all helped Joe Kennedy promote his son John into the Presidency years later, due to their shared dislike of Eleanor Roosevelt. Reading every twist and turn is like watching two scorpions in a bottle. The flavor of the 20's comes back in an oddly unsettling way. That was an era of crude racial epithets and harsh language, of squalid scrambles for money and position, when men behaved like alley cats, and with as much self-consciousness. Roosevelt was part of that period: he took many inept and expensive flyers in Wall Street and was a partner with many sleazy individuals. Kennedy blossomed in that climate, and in Hollywood, and in radio—and later in real estate and oil. Both men would do anything to get whatever they wanted. They knew each other. When FDR chided Kennedy about one of his mistresses and advised that he keep her out of sight Kennedy said, "Not till you get rid of Missy le Hand!"

The primary difference between them was that Roosevelt had been raised to noblesse oblige. He considered Hitler an upstart on the world stage, and set out to emulate his mentor, Woodrow Wilson. In the end he brought back all the Wilsoniana: the League of Nations, the soaring rodomontade, the regimentation, the smallness toward his critics, the ability to fool parvenus and the inability to get along with his peers. Over and beyond the historic events with which Roosevelt was engaged and in which, to a lesser extent, Kennedy figured loom some larger and less-often-noted realities which are barely grazed by Beschloss's carefully neutral, academically neutered judgment. These realities are in the area of character. Mr. Roosevelt was a great leader whose contempt for the intelligence of other men led him into repeated lies, disguises, frauds and deceits. His method of confronting the nazi horror was, like Churchill's, stained by a willingness to get into bed with Stalin. Neither FDR nor Churchill believed we could defeat the dictators on our own. His conduct as President violated constitutional limits and the rules of decency in many of his dealings. Before he appointed Kennedy an ambassador he made him drop his pants, then commented that the Boston Irishman was too bowlegged to wear the required knee breeches at the Court of St. James. Kennedy, having endured that coarse and demeaning trick, grew ass's ears by rushing out to get permission from the British to wear trousers to Court.

Kennedy, whose character was no better than his master's, cursed Roosevelt behind his back and crawled before him to his face. Both men combined against Coughlin, to whom they told lies. Both men used whoever they could as an instrument in their games of power. It is the claim of the Roosevelt cultists and the Kennedy-family cultists that the flaws of their heroes are for-

In the forthcoming issue of *Chronicles of Culture:*

Cultural Fascism or The Librarians

"In any human life, not all is possible, only some. Deciding what that some will be and structuring one's life so that as much of that some as possible can be attained and constitute the core of coming to terms with reality and of mastering one's own identity . . . The types of choices available to women have indeed changed since the advent of feminism, but that single reality in itself does not alter, nor should it obscure, the fact that choice is still choice, and choice, in pursuit of self-definition, is still an arduous and self-initiated process. To suggest otherwise . . . seems a rather blatant misperception . . . of the human condition itself."

from "Choices & Self-Definition"
by Christina Murphy

Also:
Opinions & Views—Commendables—In Focus
Waste of Money—Perceptibles—The American Proscenium—Stage—Screen—Art
Music—Correspondence—Liberal Culture
Journalism

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

givable on the basis of larger issues and higher goals. But the fact is that Mr. Roosevelt weakened, as Joe Kennedy said he would, the democracy he claimed to defend. And Kennedy sold his sponsor short behind his back, as Roosevelt predicted he would do. The record of their relationship, therefore, leaves a sad and sour aftertaste. It makes depressing reading for anyone who believes the American people, had they been better led, would have played a far better role in the world, not only before World War II, but also since then.

If Mr. Roosevelt had told the truth about his purposes and goals and the reasons for them, the United States might have entered World War II sooner and been far better oriented about its purposes. It is, of course, well known that Joe Kennedy was held up to scorn in later years for having been against American entry into the war. But those who express that contempt today are not always noticeably willing to stand up to the U.S.S.R., which is the menace of today. Appeasers today are as active as in 1938, and they have little right to be retroactively scornful about actions they are repeating. Both Roosevelt and Kennedy were prototypes: one of a President who repeatedly lied to the nation, and the other of an ambassador willing to truckle to unfriendly dictators. □

Familial Pluralism

Frederick Busch: *Rounds;* Farrar, Straus & Giroux; New York.

by Joseph Schwartz

In one sense "round" means "finished"; in another sense it means brought to a satisfying completion. Frederick Busch's seventh novel is best understood by making an analysis of these two possible meanings of its title. The novel is "finished" in much the same way a round dance is, a course or series ending at its starting point, the dancers having been arranged in a circle to begin with. "We are engaged, each of us, in one another's lives." The architectural pattern Busch chooses to show this engagement is carefully worked out, one of the best things about the novel.

Eli Silver, the pediatrician-protagonist, and Gwen, his wife, have lost a child in an accident. Phil and Annie Sorenson, childless, want a child. Elizabeth Bean and Horace L'Ordinet make a child they do not want. Eli has an affair with Elizabeth Bean, and, as surrogate father to the unborn child, persuades her to allow the Sorensons to adopt it. Eli and Gwen decide to have another child. As in the singing of a round, each couple enters in unison at intervals, creating the rhythmical canon in which each plays a part. The clinical charting above has some point if we are to understand why young Weeks quotes Julian of Norwich (by way of T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets)* to the effect that all manner of things will be well—brought to a satisfying completion. But "round" as in a dance is also used in the *Quartets* to suggest the circular motion which leads only to "Dung and Death." Is marriage "The association of man and woman/ In daunsinge . . . /A dignified and commodiois sacrament," or only "The time of the coupling of man and woman/ And that of beasts"? The reader must make a judgment as to whether a "round" illustrates that our beginning is in our end, or its opposite, that our motion is only circular, a combination of merely repetitive patterns.

These hints from Eliot may be false signals, inadvertent, ironic or directive. In Eliot's work an understanding of them rests ultimately on the idea of Christian hope. Can the same be said of Busch's novel? How is it to be read? Is it brought to a satisfying completion?

"Think of it—we take what we get" appears to be a fair statement of the thematic resolution of the complicated plot. In finding a place for the love we have to give, we take what we get and give what we can. Yet another meaning of "rounds" is pertinent: a course of prescribed actions and duties, as in Dr. Silver making his rounds. The statement of theme seems, if a bit stoical, full of common sense. After all, what we get is sometimes determined by forces beyond our control. An essential dimension of freedom is responding in our actions and duties to what we get. Young Weeks's reference to Eliot-Julian might be understood at this level alone, but not finally, I think. All manner of things being well rests upon one's full and uncompromising acceptance of the notion of a beneficent Divine Providence. In that light family is a sacred concept; children are a sacramental blessing. Wife and husband without reservation make gifts of themselves to each other. Violations of that trust cause the stones to shout (even if we do not hear them). Of *Rounds* it can be fairly said that this spiritual dimension has no existence whatsoever in shaping the course of the narrative.

It is true that in the novel, marriage is taken seriously and children are regarded as precious because they are powerful tokens of the love that engenders them and that they so naturally cause. Attention is paid to "the family of man, the network of human relationship, the common morality." Yet one is puzzled. All the characters and the omniscient narrator attempt to understand the joy and agony of love and creation only from a profane perspective. That fragile perspective never holds up under the assault of life. It is inevitable that it will allow exceptions where exceptions are not allowable. (It *really* isn't murder.) It comes finally, inevitably, to sentimentality—baby's arrival

Dr. Schwartz edits Renascence, *a literary quarterly.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is greeted with a Hallmark card in place of baptism. Of all the basic human conditions family is, it seems, most subject to the trivializing pathos of sentimentality.

Let me be specific. Eli's brutal use of Elizabeth as "a baby machine" is certainly frowned upon, and rather forcefully portrayed, but the ultimate cause of the frown (should it be a terrible scowl?) is never even considered. The two homosexuals, Demby and Turner, go off together gayly, "a promising start," having found love. It is difficult to decide whether or not they are a discordant note in the otherwise heterosexual round ("At least you won't get pregnant"), or one more realization of love having found its object. Even if the odd couple is used ironically, we have no way of knowing what might be at the base of the irony.

Most important, Dr. Eli Silver, pediatrician. Busch is tireless in presenting the gruesome details of Silver making his rounds, proving his passionate commitment to fending off temporarily the early consequences of mortality in the young. Guilt-ridden over accidentally allowing his son to die, he resolves to have another. Yet he can, with the compassion bred from sentimentality, commit murder because a young patient is hopelessly ill. The courage to give life and the "courage" to take it are radically different matters. If the difference need be spelled out, one is creation and the other, as Eli knows, is murder. What now of the family of man and the common morality? I cannot find any suggestion in the text that this monstrous action is a profound and irresponsible violation of the network of human relationships.

While Busch seems aware of the primitive power of the family, the network of human relationships and the common morality must be understood as something more than primitive. The delicate balance of responsibilities sustaining the Judeo-Christian nature of marriage depends upon something more than a functional analysis of society. Without Busch's intending it, *Rounds* brings to mind the recent White House Conference on The American Family. Chairman Jim Guy Tucker's welcoming remarks are especially important: ". . . we're going to focus on today's families, their diversity and pluralism." Anyone who knows anything about that conference knows that "pluralism" was a code word for including every deviant variation of the essential family structure. The sense of the pluralism of family forms was given official sanction, as it were, but only because society had already accepted it as a fact. It had become part of the cultural ambience so that it was naturally a part of the novelist's world. Without normative standards, which I do not find implied in Busch's novel, unsanctioned sexual arrangements, promiscuity and homosexuality cannot be discouraged or restrained. One would not be surprised to find such pluralism in sociology textbooks dealing with the family, but it is disappointing to find it in the work of a novelist who should know better. □

On Economic Dreams and Facts

Lester C. Thurow: *The Zero-Sum Society;* Basic Books; New York.

by William E. Cage

Hundreds of thousands of college students have enrolled in Economics 101 and, within five days, have discovered why economics is called the "dismal science." It *can* be dismal as a course of study—it uses abstract and unmeasurable concepts, the professors are fond of drawing all manner of strange graphs on the blackboard, and the answer to almost all questions is "it all depends." At the same time, professors of economics have a reputation for cockiness, for appearing to know more than anyone else, for seeming to belong to a group of insiders who have simple answers to complex problems.

However, the discipline of economics truly deserves its title of "dismal" not from the rigors of Econ. 101 but from the anti-utopian nature of economic analysis. Sound economics does not allow any "free lunches." Pie-in-the-sky schemes are dashed to the ground. Solutions to problems are, though simple, next to impossible to achieve. The fun of economics—yes, economics *can* be fun—comes in pointing out how simple the causes of our problems are. The next natural step would be to set forth prescriptions for policies which will, all other things being equal, solve those problems. But what have we introduced implicitly, if not explicitly? It is *policy.* That is, it is government actions that we seem to immediately bring in as a means of solving problems. However, what often escapes us is the fact that most policy prescriptions are for *eliminating* the policy. That, of course, leads to the next logical step which is that government policy is the primary *cause* of our multitude of economic woes. For example: there is little doubt that unemployment is a serious social and economic ill. Almost any professional economist would prescribe a reduction or elimination of the minimum wage as a means of reducing unemployment. If we pursue the subject even further, we would probably find that eliminating the minimum wage would, in addition to reducing unemployment, reduce crime in the streets, discipline problems in the schools, and perhaps even the teenage suicide rate. If we wanted to spice up the entire argument, we could also add that the minimum wage is one of the secret weapons that northern states have used to continue fighting the South more than a century after the Civil War

Dr. Cage is a corporate economist in Joplin, Missouri.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

formally ended. The reader can surely sense the fun and delight that an economist would derive (perversely, perhaps) by pointing out how simple the cause is of unemployment—and crime, school discipline problems and even youthful despair—and what great personal satisfaction must come when, with a flourish of chalk, the economist can simply prescribe wiping the minimum wage law off the books. Fun and delightful, yes. But effective? No.

We are now at the point of Dr. Thurow's new book, *The Zero-Sum Society.* The unusual title describes exchanges where one person loses what another person gains. With a few quick assumptions about interpersonal utility, the total gains in any group of zero-sum transactions must equal zero. The gains exactly cancel out the losses, and the losses cancel out the gains.

Economic transactions in a system of voluntary exchange are not of the zero-sum type. Any exchange into which people enter voluntarily *must* benefit both parties. That seems to be true even in a poker game, where everyone knows ahead of time that the only way for some to win is for some to lose; the explanation is that no individual actually expects that he or she will be a loser, and therefore enters into the game under the presumption of coming out a winner. In short, economists seem to have stumbled onto the one truly free lunch available. The free lunch results from *both* parties benefiting from a voluntary transaction. Both buyer and seller feel themselves to be better off after the sale than they were before.

Zero-sum transactions almost invariably occur as a result of coercion. A thief can only gain what his victim loses. The necessity of coercion seems self-evident. No one would voluntarily enter into a transaction in which he knew that he would certainly come out a loser. The presence of coercion in zero-sum games points our attention in the direction of the agent of coercion. Apart from the criminal element in society, that agent is government. Government has, by its very nature, an ability to induce zero-sum transactions wherever it operates. It is not an institution of voluntary transactions. Indeed, voluntarism negates the need for governmental action. And so we come around to the point at which government, which is the cause of so many of our economic woes, is also the barrier to the effective solution of economic problems. Whenever government has acted zero-sum transactions have resulted, whether it be welfare programs in which funds are taken directly from one group and given to another, or whether it is import tariffs which benefit the producer at the cost of the consumer, or any other of the multitude of government programs. The very fact that one party has benefited at the expense of another means that to reverse those transactions, and presumably to solve the economic problem, the people who formerly benefited must now incur a cost. Those costs have political consequences (for example, not being re-elected) and therefore stand in the way of effective and simple solutions to our problems. As government has grown those costs have become increasingly large and, therefore, they increasingly harden the resistance to reversing the policies which caused the problems.

And so, as Dr. Thurow points out, we are on the horns of a dilemma. One horn is the economic difficulties in which we find ourselves. The other horn is the costs which must be incurred by segments of our society if we are to solve those problems. It would surely seem that the solution to the problems would benefit the entire economy more than the costs which only some people would incur. However, the benefits are diffused across the entire population, whereas the costs are imposed upon, visible to and felt by specific people within the economy, all of whom have some political clout.

This reasoning is far from being original or new. Almost any professor of economics goes through the same reasoning for his introductory classes each semester. He points out the causes of our economic problems, and the students then rejoin him with the question, "If the solution is so simple, why don't we do it?" The professor's response is most likely to be, "There are too many vested interests." He may not be inclined to couch it in such phrases as "the solution is necessarily a zero-sum transaction," but the logic is the same as that which Dr. Thurow presents in his book. So with this line of argument having been presented to countless students in numberless economics courses, can it be said that *The Zero-Sum Society* plows any new ground? It does in a very basic sense, a general sense, in that it brings orthodox economic analysis of a host of present problems to the attention of the lay reader in a reasonably short volume which is easily understood. The analyses leave room for disagreement. For example, Dr. Thurow lays some of the responsibility for our inflation problem at the doorstep of OPEC, whereas others could reasonably argue that higher oil prices could not cause inflation in the sense of a rise in the general price level unless there were an accompanying increase in the supply of money. In his opening remarks, Thurow leaves the impression that the United States is no longer the country with the highest standard of living, although he corrects that impression later on. He also says that the rest of the world is catching up with us and will soon surpass us—an idea which is extremely doubtful because the rest of the world is making the same type of mistakes that we are and occasionally to a far greater degree. Nonethe-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

less, Thurow analyzes problems of energy, inflation, slow economic growth, environmental problems, rules and regulations, and income redistribution in a basic and straightforward manner with which most economists would find little to quibble.

More fundamentally, though, Thurow is introducing some new thoughts on these problems—or rather on the solutions for these problems. He recognizes that the standard economic answers such as eliminating the minimum wage to reduce unemployment simply will not be effective because it is a zero-sum transaction. That is, the real *problem* is the zero-sum nature of the *solutions.* And it is with that problem that Thurow wrestles.

The Zero-Sum Society offers some specific actions which we could take to get out of the zero-sum box. It is unfortunate that those actions apparently involve government to an even greater extent in our economic system. That seems to be analogous to pouring gasoline on a fire to put it out. While Thurow's analytical structure is essentially sound, and while he is to be applauded for attempting some serious solutions to our problems, his solutions are unnecessarily complex and use the wrong instrument—that is, government—to lever us out of the difficulties in which we find ourselves. There is no question that if we eliminated many of the policies that generate our problems, some people and some businesses would suffer economic losses. Thurow seems to think that those individuals who do incur losses will have to be compensated if we are to get off dead center. I suspect that there are other possibilities. In fact, the first portion of Dr. Thurow's book does offer another kind of answer. Our government is, for all its shortcomings, still responsive to the will of the electorate. As voters become informed about the causes of our problems, they will press for workable solutions regardless of the costs imposed upon certain individuals. After all, those individuals have had their time in the sun, have had their economic gains at the expense of everyone else. A case in point is the deregulation of the airline industry. The airlines dragged their heels and fought deregulation because they knew it would mean that they would have to compete with each other for the consumer's dollar. Still, the deregulation was effected and the competition in the industry has been a welcome change. If the solution of "get the government out" can be effected in such an industry, it can surely be applied elsewhere. That is not to say it will be easy to do, but Dr. Thurow's book moves us a step closer to the day when it will be done. □

Desperation Transformed into Transcendence

Arna Bontemps—Langston Hughes: Letters 1925-1967; **Edited by Charles H. Nichols; Dodd, Mead & Co.; New York.**

by Allan C. Brownfeld

Arna Bontemps and Langston Hughes were born in 1902, became acquainted in 1924 and continued their friendship until Hughes's death in 1967. About their correspondence Bontemps wrote: "All told I am convinced we have the fullest documentation of the Afro-American experience in the new world, artistic, intellectual, covering the mid-20th century, one is likely to find anywhere. The immediate response of two writers to events and conditions that touched their careers." The editor of these letters, Professor Charles H. Nichols of Brown University, notes: "What stands out in their correspondence is the firmness of their commitment to African and Afro-American culture . . . This sense of mission obsessed them both and drew them into a lasting bond of mutual interests and deep affection."

Both children of the black middle class, Hughes and Bontemps suffered what W.E.B. Du Bois referred to as "this double consciousness, this sense of always looking at oneself through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks in amused contempt and pity . . ." Bontemps himself observed: "In their opposing attitudes toward their roots . . . every educated American Negro must somehow take sides."

Hughes and Bontemps were sons of men who were disdainful of the black folk heritage—its music, literature and art. Bontemps was sent to a white boarding school during his high-school years and his father advised him, "Now don't go up there acting colored." Langston Hughes's father, a lawyer, acquired property and status in Mexico and hoped his son would turn his back on the United States entirely. Instead, both men embraced the black past and sought to create from it a literature of memory and of hope for the future. Hughes wrote in 1926: "We younger Negro artists who write now intend to express our individual dark skinned selves without fear or shame. If white people are pleased, we are glad. If they are not, it doesn't matter. We know we are beautiful. And ugly too. The tom-tom cries and the tom-tom laughs. If colored people are pleased we are glad. If not, their displeasure doesn't matter either. We build our temples for tomorrow, strong as we know how, and we stand on top of the mountain free within ourselves." They wrote novels, plays, songs and poems as well as a vast body of journalism. Bontemps wrote *Drums at Dusk,*

Mr. Brownfeld is on the staff of Lincoln Review.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Black Thunder and *100 Years of Negro Freedom* and the Broadway play *St. Louis Woman,* which was attacked by Walter White and other black leaders for allegedly perpetuating the demeaning stereotype of the peasant Negro. Langston Hughes has been called the first black American to earn his living entirely from writing. He wrote *Selected Poems, The Big Sea, I Wander as I Wander,* the lyrics to *Street Scene* and three volumes of his famous "Simple" books. Jesse Simple was a Harlem fictional character who viewed the world from a weekly column in *The Chicago Defender* and other black newspapers.

The experiences of black Americans, Hughes observed, have produced the folklore—the language and feeling—of black America. He wrote: ". . . the people who are apart from the main stream of life develop certain ways of talking, certain social characteristics of their own . . ." The French scholar Jean Wagner summed up Hughes's achievement in these terms: "Instinctively in perfect harmony with the temperament of the black masses in the huge cities of our day . . . he was uniquely successful in capturing every subtlety in the atavistic rhythms that characterize his race . . ."

Contemporary black leaders who argue that the situation of black Americans is unchanged from the past should carefully read these letters. In 1925, when the correspondence began, blacks lived in a world of segregation and meager opportunities. When the correspondence came to an end, Arna Bontemps had been named a member of the Nashville Library Committee and had been a guest lecturer at Peabody and Vanderbilt Universities. In 1966 he joined the faculty of the University of Illinois. In 1969 he went to Yale. Langston Hughes was hailed around the world as a distinguished American author, lecturing across the country and in Europe and Africa.

Both Hughes and Bontemps found themselves used by communist groups during the years before and during World War II. In 1932 a contingent of two dozen American Negroes were recruited by the communists to make a film, *Black and White,* which was intended to show the horrors of the capitalist world, beginning with the slave trade. In his own memoirs, black conservative George Schuyler recalls: "The Negroes recruited to act in this film knew nothing about acting, nor did their leader, Langston Hughes. But the whole project was widely publicized and at a time when the American stage was virtually barred to Negroes, except in vaudeville and Negro musical comedies. However, when Langston Hughes had labored over the film script, and all was ready for the shooting, the Reds postponed production and the film never was made. Henry Lee Moon and Theodore Poston returned and explained that the film postponement was due to the desire of Stalin to curry favor with the United States, with an eye to eventual diplomatic recognition . . ."

Also in the 1930's, Hughes was involved with the communist-dominated movement to defend Angelo Herndon and the Scottsboro boys, which led him to sign a letter calling for the removal of George Schuyler from his position with the *Pittsburgh Courier.* At that time Hughes was president of the League for the Struggle for Negro Rights, which was described by Schuyler and others as "a Communist front." It was a period during which the American Communist Party was making every effort to recruit black Americans, an effort which largely failed. At a 1925 Kremlin meeting with several black communists, Joseph Stalin asked why blacks, "the most oppressed section of the American working class," were not better represented in the Communist Party and was told that it was due to "prejudice and discrimination." The Communist Party thus began to call for the creation of black self-determination in a so-called "Black Belt" in the United States while what most blacks wanted was integration into an open and free society. Professor Harvey Klehr writes: "The Communist Party was never able to recruit a significant percentage of the American black community into its ranks. Dramatic episodes such as the Scottsboro case sometimes resulted in a small influx, but most blacks were not attracted by the party's role in defending accused blacks or promoting black communists . . . ." Neither Hughes nor Bontemps ever actually joined the Communist Party. In 1941, Bontemps urged Hughes to write a report about his Moscow visit since he "might catch the tide at the full about this time next year . . . I look for a number of books designed to correct all the bitter feelings caused by the Finland business and the Hitler pact . . ." In general, international politics—or even politics within the United States—play small part in this correspondence. Most of it is personal, discussions of lack of funds, the difficulty of literary success. The names of the great literary figures of our time cross these pages, both black and white. Hughes had a close relationship with many leading writers, among them Carson McCullers and Katherine Ann Porter. Yet discrimination was widespread, even in self-proclaimed liberal literary circles in the

In the Mail

Irish Poetry from Moore to Yeats **by Robert Welch; Gill and Macmillan, Barnes & Noble Books; Totowa, New Jersey.** An examination of the works of seven of the most significant Irish poets of the 19th century.

Squid Soup **by Michael Mooney; Story Press; Chicago, Illinois.** A collection of short stories written by a doctor of medieval literature.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

North. In a 1942 letter, Bontemps writes of a Chicago literary party: "Only two Negroes . . . We didn't get our invitations till nearly the last day. S. Evans, top man under Marshall Field, struck the colored names off the list and had to be pressured by the head man to replace them . . . ."

Neither Hughes nor Bontemps permitted the segregated society in which they were so often forced to live to segregate their minds. The contemporary notions of "black power" and "black identity" would probably have meant little to them. They were literary men writing from their own experience and background, but seeking the universal. Discussing the just-published book of Carson McCullers, a white Southerner, Bontemps states, "What a mad genius that gal is!" Speaking of the main character in *Ballad of the Sad Cafe,* he writes, "I never quite knew whether to laugh or cry about that hunchback. I intend to call the attention of all the budding campus writers to the story." Of Arthur Koestler, Bontemps writes; "He happens to be one of my favorite prose writers, at his best." Hughes, who became a friend of Koestler's, recalled that Koestler once referred to him as "That great Negro poet I met in Russia, a member of the Party as was I, Langston Hughes, who is now dead . . . ." He recalls: "When he saw me backstage afterward, you should have seen him! The best laugh of the year."

Many blacks criticized Hughes's Jesse Simple as a character who would embarrass them. Bontemps disagrees: "He is the only new humorous creation in black flesh in a very long time. He catches the wisdom of the Harlem folk as no one else has done. And he is funny . . . He is the very hipped, race-conscious, fighting-back, city-bred great-grandson of Uncle Remus." Of Ralph Ellison and his years of work on the novel, *The Invisible Man,* Bontemps writes to Hughes: "The difference between your situation and Ralph's is that Ralph is evidently making this one novel his life's work . . . When one is producing such a book, the idea is not to finish it till one is tired of living . . . ." Autobiographies, as Hughes believes, often provide the reader with a distorted picture of the life of the author: "The kind of intense condensation that, of course, keeps an autobiography from being entirely true, in that nobody's life is pure essence without pulp . . ." Of the so-called "beat generation" of writers, Bontemps expressed this view: ". . . the beatnik vocabulary is obviously right out of Negroana. They have scarcely added an inflection. They are *not* a very talented group as a whole, in my opinion. Bohemians without the creative ability that is the traditional and classical justification for bohemianism."

Arna Bontemps and Langston Hughes rebelled against the light-skinned black middle class into which they were born. They did not dedicate their lives to rejecting black culture and art but, instead, to cultivating it, to recording it, to creating a literature to build upon. But they were not black public-relations men, attempting to paint a picture without blemishes. They told the whole story which they saw around them, and many white liberals and black leaders, such as those within the NAACP, criticized them harshly for it. Professor Nichols sums it all up: ". . . what both Hughes and Bontemps bequeathed us is their capacity to experiment with a variety of literary forms, their use of the common rhythms and speech of Afro-Americans, their use of spirituals, blues and jazz in complex and original forms. To be sure the black idiom may be seen and heard in American writers like Mark Twain, Joel Chandler Harris, Du Bose Haywood and Eugene O'Neill. But it is especially in the 'Beat Generation' . . . that the daring search for new forms took shape . . . This mood, this language, this psychological transformation of desperation into transcendence was in the rhythm and sound of the black man's life . . ." □

In the Mail

Reagan and the Courts by Charles E. Rice; Washington Legal Foundation; Washington, D.C. Prospects for various judicial reforms under a Reagan administration.

Domestic Oil: The Hidden Solution by Milton R. Copulos; The Heritage Foundation; Washington, D.C. New possibilities for tapping American oil reserves.

Dividing the Wealth by Howard E. Kershner; Devin-Adair; Old Greenwich, Connecticut. A classic study of how our economic system works (or doesn't work) and how politics affect it.

Metric Madness by J. W. Batchelder; Devin-Adair; Old Greenwich, Connecticut. 150 reasons for not converting the United States to the metric system.

The Family, Feminism and the Therapeutic State by Onalee McGraw; The Heritage Foundation; Washington, D.C. Dr. McGraw analyzes and challenges the assumptions of family "professionals" and examines some of the negative effects of government intrusion upon families.

Nicholas Ferrar of Little Gidding by A. L. Maycock; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; Grand Rapids, Michigan. A biography of Ferrar and the religious community he founded.

Beckett & the Voice of Species by Eric P. Levy; Gill and Macmillan, Barnes & Noble Books; Totowa, New Jersey. An analysis of the novels of Samuel Beckett.

Signs of Our Times by George S. Heyer; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; Grand Rapids, Michigan. A collection of theological essays on art in the 20th century.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Speculating About Justice

Charles Rembar: *The Law of the Land: The Evolution of Our Legal System;* Simon & Schuster; New York.

by Clarence B. Carson

I would like to know why one communicates with United States District Courts on fourteen-inch-long paper and with Circuit Courts of Appeal on eleven-inch-long paper. Beyond that, I wonder on what length and width paper one communicates with the Supreme Court, if, that is, one can communicate with that august body. Unfortunately Mr. Rembar, who has done such a decisive job of filling us in on all sorts of arcane artifacts of the law, has neglected to cover the subject in his book.

It is not entirely clear why Mr. Rembar has undertaken the arduous task of writing this rather lengthy volume. Not for fun, I hope. Not, mind you, that there should be any doubt about his ability to write on any subject he chooses. He is, after all, urbane, erudite, even recondite, charming, informed, literate, has a way with words (in fact, sometimes words have their way with him), and a man of broad interests. Nor do I object overmuch to his flights of speculation or even his rambling on about things. Be that as it may, I raise the question because the book just does not add up to much. Mr. Rembar lavishes attention on medieval background and gives rather short shrift to developments of the last two or three hundred years. There is a good deal more description of and chatter about trial by ordeal, battle and compurgation than the subject would appear to warrant. It is true that the common law was developed in the Middle Ages, as were a number of legal practices, though in barely recognizable form, but they are as the seed to the ear of corn, not to be neglected but not to dominate and obscure it either.

Yet Mr. Rembar has undertaken to write on a subject of great importance to us. We look to the law to bring or to maintain order, to punish transgressors, to settle disputes and, by so doing, to provide a setting within which civilization can not only survive but even flourish. Our legal system is a shambles. Criminal cases do not go on trial for many months in some jurisdictions. Most of them never do, for plea bargaining has become the standard method for disposing of them. Compromise, a political virtue, replaces justice in so many of these cases. Trials, both criminal and civil, are often very nearly interminable affairs. Then there are the appeals upon appeals which may go on for years before a final resolution is reached, if one ever is. Mr. Rembar thinks trial by ordeal was banished in the Middle Ages. On the contrary, it has been revived in our time. The ordeal now is to see which party can outlast the other through all the waiting for the trial, through all the meticulous information-gathering and, finally, through appeal after appeal. All the while, justice frustrated creates lesions which fester and swell, and disorder spreads.

None of this much disturbs Mr. Rembar, although he may occasionally make a ritual lament about justice delayed being justice denied. I gather, instead, that he thinks we are well on our way to establishing justice, finally, in the United States, and that we may have arrived when we place enough obstacles in the way of law enforcement, make it virtually impossible to introduce evidence of guilt in a court of law, and when the appeal process is made more readily available to everyone.

Meanwhile he does see room for improvement here and there. If he didn't, his credentials as a liberal might come into question, even despite his yeoman service to the cause in getting laws against obscenity negated. He does think courts ought to do a bit more about relevancy in depositions taken in civil suits. Nothing drastic, of course, just rein in a bit the excessive curiosity of the more imaginative inquisitors. Anyone who has ever been deposed by well-paid corporate lawyers or salaried government attorneys will appreciate the problem. A fishing expedition down a narrow stream might be tolerable, but they are no sooner under way than they head out to sea. Since the source of the problem is probably epistemological (that is, arising from the notion that truth emerges from empirical evidence, especially mountains of it, a belief only slightly more plausible than that of the discredited biological theory of spontaneous generation), since Mr. Rembar's philosophical acumen may not ascend to that realm, and since he considers it a fairly minor problem anyway, he offers no more than the palliative of judicial strictness as a solution.

Our system does have one serious shortcoming, as Counselor Rembar sees it. It is that most people cannot afford the legal services which would assure that they get justice. The solution to the problem, he thinks, is to have government-paid attorneys available to all. True, that would be socialistic, but he

Dr. Carson's latest book is The World in the Grip of an Idea.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

considers that no major objection since, as he observes, we already have a great deal of socialism anyway. What harm could there be, after all, in throwing just one more shovel of dirt on a person who is in the process of being buried alive?

I think he is overlooking some relevant details. The move that he is suggesting would be in the direction of undermining the adversary system. In our legal system, lest Mr. Rembar has forgotten, the government prosecutes, is one of the adversaries, and the accused defends himself, usually through an advocate, and is the other adversary. The government's role is to maintain the peace by seeing to it that the guilty are punished and that the occasion for private vengeance is avoided. Government is also interested in seeing that justice is done. To that end, courts are provided, and judges and juries are appointed; these are no part of the adversary system but are supposed to be impartial. The assumption is that the accused has a primary interest in being found not guilty, especially if he is not, and that it is his right to defend himself in the manner which he thinks best, within the frame of the legal system, of course. To that end, normally the accused will adopt an adversary position if he thinks best—it is *pro forma* now, in some instances—and provide for his own defense. For the state automatically to come to his defense is to make every person who is accused a ward of the state.

But my main concern here is what this innovation would do to the adversary system. How would criminal cases be styled? The State of New York v. the State of New York, in the case of John Doe? Or, the People of the State of Wisconsin v. the People of the State of Wisconsin? My concern is not merely stylistic or formal. Lincoln said that a house divided against itself cannot stand. Surely, if government were to regularly adopt an adversary stand against itself, it could not stand. Either the adversary system would have to go, or the government would fall. I would bet that it would be the adversary system, but nowadays, who knows?

It is not my point that Mr. Rembar wrote this large book to advance this dubious scheme. That is most doubtful. One does not use an infantry division to arrest a bicycle thief. Besides, the proposal is accorded little space and, as a lawyer would say, he had presented too little background to carry the weight of it. But these comments get us nearer to grasping his purpose, so far as he may have had one.

The use of "evolution" in the title is suggestive, too. Mr. Rembar has an implicit linear theory of historical progress. That is, he assumes, or thinks his readers assume, that there has been a straight line of progress upward from the Middle Ages to the present, and possibly much further back than that. (Not in the law, of course, because he recognizes that law in the early Middle Ages was much inferior to Roman law.) If that were true, it should follow that our system is superior not only to that of the Middle Ages but also to that which prevailed 50 years ago, which was better than that of 150 years ago, and so on backward into the mists of history.

If so, this makes his focus on medieval history understandable. It is much easier to demonstrate, at least to the contemporary mentality, that our present system is superior to that of the Middle Ages than it is to that of 75 years ago. Anyway, he doesn't think very highly of medieval culture. He thinks it was barbaric, and that recent historians have greatly exaggerated its felicities. Perhaps. And perhaps ours is a barbaric age, a statement I am prepared to defend with a great deal more evidence than he has examined about the Middle Ages, judging from his bibliography.

Even so, I remain open to the proposition that Mr. Rembar had no very serious purpose in mind in writing this book. I hope not. Further, I hope that those who read it are the kind of folk who revel in the quaintness of the odd, strange and curious doings of our ancestors, which they would not go to the trouble of understanding but about which they would enjoy parlor speculations. Mr. Rembar has provided a feast for such incognoscenti. He is, of course, much too urbane to be one of them. □

A Captivating Jeremiah Amidst Us

***Solzhenitsyn at Harvard;* Edited by Ronald Berman; Ethics and Public Policy Center; Washington, D.C.**

by Philip F. Lawler

> Is there, in social life, a grosser incivility than that of thinking about the man who addresses us instead of thinking about what he says?
>
> —C. S. Lewis
> *The Personal Heresy*

Unlike the standard commencement address, which generates at best a passing reference in the local paper, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's speech at Harvard in 1978 stirred up a storm of editorial replies. Almost without exception, the pundits began their responses by bowing to the obvious personal heroism of the Russian exile. "If anyone has earned the right to call the West to a moral reckoning," began the *New York Times,* "it is Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn." But alas (the editorials continued), in his attacks on Western secularism Solzhenitsyn had betrayed some rather unpleasant ideas of his own.

Clearly, then, the editorialists were attacking not Solzhenitsyn the man, but only his ideas. Or so they claimed. But immediately after making that demur-

Mr. Lawler is managing editor of Policy Review.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ral, the editorials launched into a discussion of Solzhenitsyn the man. Two years after that controversial Harvard address, the issues raised by Solzhenitsyn have not yet been laid to rest. A great service to the cause of accurate rhetoric has been done by publishing the original speech, twelve typical representations of the early editorial responses and six new essays—by Sidney Hook and Richard Pipes, among others, —evaluating Solzhenitsyn's ideas and their impact.

Americans are not accustomed to strong criticism—especially when that criticism comes from an emigrant, an emigrant hounded out of his own country by a totalitarian regime, an emigrant whose life is dedicated to exposing the brutality of that regime. We expected Solzhenitsyn to come to Harvard singing democracy's praises. Instead he came like Plato's Athenian stranger, to question our laws, to probe our philosophical underpinnings, and—it soon became clear—to offer the vision of a more humane society.

So the applause that greeted Solzhenitsyn at Harvard quickly turned into bewilderment and bitterness. The editorials were overwhelmingly unfavorable, and Solzhenitsyn retreated to sequester himself in Vermont. Now the authors of these six new essays restore some sense of perspective to the controversy. American political thought rarely admits a critique from outside the liberal democratic tradition. But that tradition is, after all, only one small branch of Western political thought. An occasional Athenian stranger, questioning our philosophical assumptions, can help immeasurably to shore up our political foundations. And the two years since that Harvard speech have underlined the need for firm foundations. The Soviet Union has proven itself as arrantly deceitful as ever. And at a time of resurgent Islamic militance, surely an appeal to our own religious ideals is apposite.

In his speech, entitled "A World Split Apart," Solzhenitsyn warned that the West had lost its "civic courage" through the pursuit of untrammeled materialism. Attacking our institutions (the press, the media, the arts, the legal system), he contended that we have sought freedom from our obligations, sinking into spiritual exhaustion. By contrast, he claimed, the oppressed peoples of Eastern Europe have gained spiritual fortitude through suffering —so that the West does not offer an attractive model for the reshaping of communist societies. Condemning the rationalism and humanism that have dominated Western thought since the Renaissance, he called for a spiritual renewal, and ended with a call for a new society, "where our physical nature will not be cursed, as in the Middle Ages, but even more importantly, our spiritual being will not be trampled upon, as in the Modern era."

This is strong stuff, and many writers reacted violently. James Reston cracked that the speech sounded like "the wanderings of a mind split apart," and pointed out (irrelevantly) that the University of Moscow would never have afforded Solzhenitsyn such freedom to condemn his hosts. Even today, William McNeill makes the same mistake. Writing for this volume, McNeill professes his horror that Solzhenitsyn in his Russian Orthodox piety believes in "one Truth and one Duty to defend that truth. Russian Communists and Russian Orthodox Christians share this kind of logic." From that shaky polemical base, McNeill builds to the conclusion that, for all practical purposes, Solzhenitsyn in his speech was defending the same values that motivate the Soviet Union.

A more common line of criticism was voiced by the *New York Times,* which cited the danger of "life in a society run by zealots like Mr. Solzhenitsyn." But this argument, too, has a limited impact. Nowhere in his speech did Solzhenitsyn indicate a desire to govern, or even to set up a government of like-minded men. Anyone who called the speech a jeremiad should have seen the point. Like the original Jeremiah, Solzhenitsyn seeks not to usurp the place of the rulers, but rather to chastise them for their spiritual weakness. He speaks in the guise of a prophet, not as a candidate for public office.

Many critics argued that Solzhenitsyn was a typical representative of Russian Orthodoxy, newly arrived in the United States and therefore unfamiliar with our democratic institutions. Surely this argument bears some weight; Solzhenitsyn himself would be the first to point out that he is laboring primarily on behalf of his Russian compatriots. Richard Pipes contributes a solid essay here, placing Solzhenitsyn within the Russian Slavophile tradition. Still, while the speech does reflect some typical Russian themes, it is clear that one cannot write off a foreigner's views simply because they are foreign; length of residence does not determine political acumen. Moreover there was something gloriously absurd about the spectacle provided by some columnists who, although they had never so much as visited Russia, calmly assured their readers that Solzhenitsyn could be understood as a typical Russian who would never really understand America. The implicit contradiction eluded most editors.

Why did so many writers attack Solzhenitsyn on such tenuous grounds? The present work provides a lively contrast between Arthur Schlesinger, writing for the *Washington Post* soon after the event, and Sidney Hook, in his new essay. Schlesinger brusquely condemns "the Solzhenitsyn vision, with its fear of human freedom, its indifference to human happiness, its scorn for democracy, its faith in the authoritarian state." Then, a mere 25 pages later, Hook assures the reader that Solzhenitsyn can be counted "on the side of democracy." How could so wide a spectrum of interpretation exist? Are we to believe that something which is so obvious to Schlesinger was nonetheless too subtle for a philosopher of Hook's stature to grasp?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Still more puzzling is the failure of most critics to answer Solzhenitsyn's fundamental premise, which he spelled out quite clearly in his speech. Arguing that the failure of Western will reflected a cause deep within our political traditions, he concluded that: "This means that the mistake must be at the very root, at the very foundation of thought in modern times. I refer to the prevailing Western view of the world which was born in the Renaissance and has found political expression since the Age of Enlightenment."

Here is the crux of the controversy. Yet only one analyst (Charles Kesler, writing in *National Review* three months after the speech) made the vital point: Solzhenitsyn is not anti-Western, at least not in the same sense in which he is anti-Soviet. He is *antimodern.* As unlike as the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. may be, they are downright similar in comparison with, say, Plato's Republic. As Kesler puts it, "his understanding . . . is more intelligible in the context of the *Nicomachean Ethics* than of *War and Peace."* A defense against Solzhenitsyn's attack, then, is perforce a defense of the whole intellectual synthesis symbolized by the Renaissance. Perhaps the United States is an unlikely place to seek such a defense. Our entire political tradition is modern; our philosophical controversies have remained circumscribed by the Renaissance. Unlike many European countries (including, of course, Russia), we have no sizable contrary traditions. Unaccustomed as we are to such debates, it was inevitable that Solzhenitsyn's speech would land on initially infertile soil.

Still, the modern consciousness is based upon premodern understanding. Western thought today reflects the impetus of thousands of years of development. So to reject the ancients is no simple decision. In fact, as Leo Strauss reminded us, modern society is made possible only by the grace of the ancient understanding. Our society takes for granted the strong moral values of its forbears. The gravamen of Solzhenitsyn's indictment is that we have ceased to respect those underlying moral values, thus becoming decadent. Our culture relies on an understanding it does not often express. Or, as Ronald Berman aptly puts it, "secular society rests upon values it has not itself provided." When these values are shaken, the society on which they rest is naturally imperiled. This (again Kesler saw the point first) is the real meaning of "The World Split Apart"—our society is divided philosophically against itself.

Certainly there are questionable facets of Solzhenitsyn's argument, and several are uncovered in these new essays. Is it necessarily true, for instance, as Solzhenitsyn said in introducing his remarks, that "truth is seldom sweet; it is almost invariably bitter"? And were the Middle Ages truly marked by "despotic repression of man's physical nature?" Harold Berman points out that, in fact, the Middle Ages saw the growth of great cities and Gothic cathedrals, legal and commercial systems, literature and the arts. They were politically repressed, no doubt, but physically? More to the point, can it be said with certainty that the peoples of Eastern Europe have been spiritually strengthened by the crushing communist oppression? That may be true for such a stalwart soul as Solzhenitsyn himself; for lesser men the system seems enervating. And finally, is Solzhenitsyn accurate in his claim that the American political system is based on the pursuit of individual pleasure alone? He bases that contention on the reference in the Declaration of Independence to the "pursuit of happiness." But "happiness" in that context should be understood in a different sense, paralleling the "happiness" cited by Aristotle as man's highest aspiration.

Looming above all these particular questions is the one central debate between authority and liberty, religious certainty and pluralism. His background might well prevent Solzhenitsyn from appreciating the greatest achievements of the secular world in this realm. The key question of American pluralism may not be so much *which* religious views one accepts, but rather *whether* one is open to religious claims. Even Solzhenitsyn himself bows to pluralism in lamenting that "we have lost the concept of a Supreme Complete Entity." This theme is one of the most consistent in Western thought; its paternity can be traced through Matthew Arnold, Burke, Pascal, Augustine—all the way back to the wellspring of Western thought in the origins of Judaism. If Solzhenitsyn had continued the debate rather than retiring into seclusion, he would have noticed that his opponents seemed unable to defend the fundamental axioms of modernity. He might have remarked that American intellectuals, by and large, live within a philosophical tradition they cannot themselves support—that they lead unexamined lives, with all the attendant dangers. If they are unable to rally to refute his claims, no wonder they have lost their collective will.

At the same time, Solzhenitsyn might also have noticed the presence of a "natural constituency" for his ideas: a segment of the American population that embraces both the institutions of modern democracy and its underlying foundations in religious faith. But if this prophet seeks out such a following, he will find it in the middle classes, not among the intellectual elite. Yes, Solzhenitsyn's understanding of American culture is inadequate, precisely because his information comes from the cultural arbiters within the intelligentsia. So, ironically, his speech at Harvard—a ringing denunciation of cultural decay—was delivered in a hotbed of the very rationalism with which, he argued, that decay begins. □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Commendables

Podhoretz's Monition

Norman Podhoretz: *The Present Danger;* Simon & Schuster; New York.

by Alan J. Levine

Norman Podhoretz has written far and away the best of the recent spate of warnings about the international situation and reappraisals of America's position. It is a brief and penetrating examination of the dilemmas facing the Western world. Podhoretz's account of the evolution of American attitudes and policies since 1960 and the impact of the Indochina War is particularly succinct, effective and devastating. The debilitating "culture of appeasement," as Podhoretz calls it, is torn apart and exposed as the tissue of corrupt lies and suicidal delusions it is. The fashionable rationalizations employed for appeasement are thoroughly refuted. Among them: the claim that military superiority was of no value, that the Soviets are a status-quo power and any aggressions they launch will be defeated by the forces of local nationalism and that today's "real" conflict is between "North and South" rather than "East and West." Though Podhoretz does not examine defense problems in great detail, what he says is clear and eminently sensible. He shows why a build-up both of conventional and strategic nuclear weapons is needed.

A few minor defects, however, should be noted. Podhoretz frequently speaks of the danger to the United States as "Finlandization"—a quiet, humiliating subordination, rather than total defeat, though he clearly recognizes that a policy of appeasement must lead to a communist takeover of Western Europe. But Finland's position is not comparable to that of the West. The Finns did not choose "Finlandization" through cowardice, stupidity or insanity; it was the best deal they could get under the circumstances, and they were willing to fight to keep such independence as they had. A policy of surrender by the West has no such obvious stopping place. As things stand now, it looks like the West has become so debilitated—rationally and morally—that it's doubtful whether *any* deal can be made, let alone one which might be rooted in Western self-interest, or which may possess any sound survival instinct.

Some parts of Podhoretz's summary of the earlier years of the Cold War are a bit oversimplified. Fortunately it's not quite true that the Soviets had a completely free hand before the containment policy was made explicit in 1947. It is very doubtful that the Kennedy administration was any more anti-Soviet than Eisenhower's—this notion seems to mistake pose for reality. It seems probable that the *beginning* of the disintegration of the containment policy can be dated to the Kennedy-Johnson era rather than to the Nixon administration, although Kennedy and Johnson were men of iron compared to their successors. Oddly, Podhoretz seems to accept the idea that the Indochina War was unwinnable, though he now summarily dismisses attacks on American policy as "immoral."

Perhaps a more serious fault is Podhoretz's failure to examine the *long-range* causes of the West's predicament, as opposed to the developments of the last twenty years. He frequently writes as though things would be all right if only we had not abandoned or slackened the containment policy. Yet it can be argued, and was argued by some people at the time it was begun, that containment was *never* adequate—and moreover, as a defensive, reactive policy it bore within itself the seeds of its own destruction. But such reflections should not detract from this brilliant description of our present dilemma. □

Dr. Levine is an historian in New York.

In Focus

Photography & Style

Beaton; Edited by James Danziger; Viking Press; New York.

by Mary Ellen Fox

Cecil Beaton was a renaissance man: illustrator, society columnist, costume and set designer, authority on fashion, diarist, man-about-town and photographer.

I saw him shortly before his death, paralyzed by a stroke, being pushed in a wheelchair by Diana Vreeland as she gave him a personal tour of the Metropolitan Museum's Costume Institute. Following their entourage as closely as I dared, I was a bit overwhelmed by the still-extant vitality and glamor of his handsome, aged figure. Neither Ingrid Bergman on Madison Avenue nor John Gielgud on Lexington, not even Martha Graham on East 57th Street could approach his way of projecting grandeur.

This book concerns itself with his talents as photographer, and even in this one field they are diverse and multifaceted. Chronicler of society figures and the Beautiful People for 60 years, official photographer to the British royal court, photographer of celebrities—stage and screen, the arts and politics—fashion photographer, travel photographer, recorder of the British war experience: his camera seems to have investigated every corner of his time's "better" reality.

Through it all, he appears to be constantly and meticulously posing his subjects, human and inanimate. This is natural in his flattering tableaux of Edward and Wallis or in the pictures of his big romantic crush, Greta Garbo. However, the most striking example of his quest for aesthetic pattern is a shot, circa 1940, of evacuated children during a blackout. The naked little bodies lying in a tangle arouse less pity than curiosity: is their pattern natural or was it arranged by Beaton for maximum effect?

This preoccupation with how things look—perhaps to the detriment of how things *are*—aroused much criticism of his work in later years, when Beaton's style slid from vogue to be replaced by more modern and fashionable photographers such as Penn, Avedon and Helmut Newton. Yet one has only to

Dr. Fox is a frequent contributor to the Chronicles.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

look at Avedon's full frontal mug shots, which claim to find the basic truth of each subject, in order to realize how much artificiality of style and substance they encapsulate. At the same time, one becomes aware that a spontaneous grace, kindness and decency of form reside in the photography of Cecil Beaton. □

* * *

Perceptibles

Amin Saikal: ***The Rise and Fall of the Shah;*** Princeton University Press; Princeton, New Jersey.

Amin Saikal, an Australian-Afghan political scientist, has supplied perhaps the first scholarly postrevolutionary account of the Shah's Iran. Unfortunately it is a disappointing work which answers few of the questions raised by the Iranian revolution.

Saikal argues that the Shah was overdependent on American support and overanxious about threats from his Soviet and "radical" Arab neighbors. He waited too long to start his modernization and reform measures. When finally begun in the 1960's, these measures were overambitious, poorly planned and hobbled by a corrupt bureaucracy. The Shah put too much emphasis on developing military strength; his economic plans produced "growth rather than development" while his regime was brutal and repressive.

Saikal suggests that Iran's political system lacked "safety valves." The Shah's "White Revolution" generated new social groups with rising political and economic expectations, but he failed to make political changes to parallel his economic and social reforms. This sensible argument, which puts Iran squarely in line with the usual explanation for modern revolutions, is not only weakly developed, but Saikal also avoids examining the ways in which Iran departs from the traditional pattern of revolution. The structure and social basis of the opposition to the Shah in the late 70's is not precisely spelled out. Why various groups supported the revolution is hardly explained and remains an interesting problem, particularly since Saikal notes that the Shah's "White Revolution" in the 60's "was able to mobilize some sections of the masses in support of his leadership and rule."

Saikal fails to compare Iran with other modernizing countries in the Middle East. The Shah's regime was undoubtedly brutal by Western standards, but was it unusually bad by Iranian or Middle Eastern ones? (Ethnic and religious minorities seem to have been treated better in Iran than in other Middle Eastern states.) In fact, even Saikal admits that Iran's economic growth rate had "reached an impressive stage"; he suggests it was actually greater than the country could absorb. It is also questionable whether redistributing wealth was a sensible aim at Iran's stage of development. And unless one accepts Saikal's belittling of Soviet and Arab aggressiveness, the Shah's foreign and defense policies were not as wholly mistaken as he maintains.

Finally Saikal notes, but does not discuss or explain, the fact that the revolution was spearheaded by reactionary fanatics hostile to the most *benevolent* aspects of the Shah's rule. He prefers to prate about the Iranians' alleged "traditional yearning for freedom and justice." It is far from clear that what the Iranian revolutionaries yearned for had anything to do with what we would consider freedom and justice. The Shah may have been a "bad guy" by Western democratic standards (though not compared to other autocrats); but that does not explain his downfall. (AJL) □

Waste of Money

Hypocrisy as Heroism

Irvin Faust: ***Newsreel;*** Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich; New York.

by Edward J. Walsh

Newsreel is contemporary fiction's answer to the television soap opera, for it has no end. The main character steps directly out of the Woody Allen cinematic tradition of talented but pathetically bewildered New York writers of Jewish heritage. Like them, he spends all his time wondering why his youth seemed better than his adulthood.

Faust is trying to sell a tongue-in-cheek saga of a rugged individualist, an Army hero of the old school who finds himself in the no-man's land of postwar American literary culture. It is a fascinating idea; unfortunately it is all talk. The major character, Speed (Manny) Finestone is a mess, and no less so for his conversations with himself, of which he and his hurt feelings are the principal topic. His private dialogues deal with his idiotic adventures with women, athletics and, in the end, a shopping-mall salesgirl who is given the persona of the Perfect Woman, even while she deceives her husband during his military tour in Vietnam. The idea is that through all this—the Cold War fever, McCarthyism, the Eisenhower blahs (though *General,* but not *President,* Eisenhower is his idol), the Johnson-Vietnam agony—the hero remains himself, untainted by the shallowness and hypocrisy that surround him. The problem is that he is a shiftless dullard who yearns for the glorious, simple war years not because they were glorious, but because they were simple—at least to him. He is really no different than the transparent, posturing writers around him, in that he is obsessed with himself. His writing career, his self-indulgent fantasies, his affairs and social connections are the centerpiece of this book, while the rambling reminiscences of the war are incoherent and bizarre.

Ultimately, the rugged individualist is a sad charade. His totally unbelievable confusion at the political and cultural evolution that takes place before his eyes, and his indifference to its consequences, make the portrait of the successful New York man of letters no more than a caricature. Ernest Hemingway put on the same kind of act, pretending that, as the old world was collapsing around him, he stood like a rock of tradition and heroism against the almost-overnight destruction of both. Irvin Faust is trying to make his book the success story of a man who did the same but, like Hemingway, Speed Finestone indulges in some very unattractive excesses. That sort of thing is usually called hypocrisy, but it is worse when it is flaunted as heroism, demanding acceptance. □

Mr. Walsh is with the United States Industrial Council in Nashville, Tennessee.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Screen

Pride and Prejudice and Cliché People

Kagemusha (The Shadow Warrior); **Written and directed by Akira Kurosawa; Twentieth Century Fox.**

Private Benjamin; **Written by Nancy Meyers, Charles Shyer and Harvey Miller; Directed by Howard Zieff; Warner Brothers.**

Ordinary People; **Screenplay by Alvin Sargent; Directed by Robert Redford; Paramount Pictures.**

by Eric Shapearo

We no longer make movies like *Kagemusha* in this country; in America even tragedy, these days, is expressed through shrillness, through a big bang of explosions, through bestiality and cruelty as the only catalysts of human terminal conditions. But Akira Kurosawa, the old master, once again has come up with a cinematic rendition of ultimate circumstances, epic truths and martial fate—and he has done it without gore, using instead a reflectiveness that opens literary vistas long absent from American movie-making.

It's a film about pride. Not vanity, but that subtle pride which is the essence of human dignity, an ingredient without which history cannot be made and people should not live and, in fact, cannot live meaningfully. A 16th-century Japanese warlord, a man of uncommon skill and moral attitude who is engaged in a complicated struggle for power with two other contenders, decides to establish a myth of invincibility for his clan by procuring a double in case of his death. His fallacious existence on earth is to be provided by a petty thief, a being of the lowest social and moral rung who was chosen for the simple reason of his physical similarity. Yet when the warlord actually is killed during a siege, his impersonator undergoes a deeply moving transmutation. He begins to yearn for something better, something more, for some moral and emotional substance which is far from material and sensual satisfactions, one which hovers somewhere in a sphere of experiences and sensations alien, even closed, to him in his natural environment.

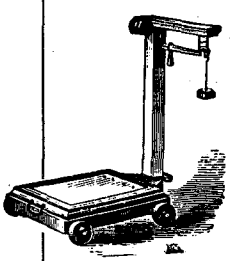
Kurosawa opens his movie with a long static episode, a dialogue between two persons who sit in the Oriental manner on the floor, and a third one—the prospective double—who follows, with trepidation, a calm, slow discourse that will determine his fate. The motionlessness of the sequence would seem to kill any attempt at drama; yet Kurosawa, here as in *Rashomon,* weaves a peculiar, argumentative tapestry of words and phrases whose cinematic beauty can be found in neither pictorial artistry nor action nor mobility, nor even in the excellence of acting—but somewhere else in the hard-to-define realm of interrelations between the audience and the movie itself. Among Western directors, perhaps only Ingmar Bergman and, lately, Michael Cimino, have moments that touch upon that specific dimension of film-making.

Kagemusha is not limited to dramatic multidimensionality or an in-depth study of humanness—a paradoxical observation, to be sure. The tensions of the existential complexities are followed by a monumental spectacle—the superb Japanese visualness of things, landscapes, shapes, hues, textures, the invasion of graphic forms and colors, drawing this time from military traditions within which generals, chieftains and great leaders write poems instead of orders of the day and sing and dance at strategy sessions. Some months ago, America marveled at the television miniseries "Shogun," mesmerized by the subtle beauty of Japanese visual paraphernalia of daily life; next to *Kagemusha,* the television production looks like a Hallmark store juxtaposed with the Louvre.

* * *

Private Benjamin is a dreary, humorless, pretentious, heavy-handed movie which most reviewers have hailed as a delightful comedy. How they could have come up with such a verdict, or impression, can only be explained by either financial expediency or absolute tastelessness. Having no proof for the former, we must settle for the latter. This, of course, exposes us to many—perhaps deserved—accusations such as cheap demagoguery or utter disloyalty toward colleagues. We reject the former and we don't mind the latter.

Perhaps in its original idea *Private Benjamin* was supposed to be a comedy. A feminist comedy, that is, which is a contradiction in terms. No one ever has



Liberal Culture

Best Minds

The battle between the Ancients and Moderns rages on. An Apple Computer Inc. advertisement for its personal computers scores a major triumph. The ad's headline proclaims: "Jefferson had one of the best minds of 1776, but today you can make better decisions with an Apple." We can't wait to hear what the Apple people have to say about Lincoln's conscience and Teddy Roosevelt's guts. They're certainly planning to say something, if only to stay in business. (GSV) □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

succeeded in making a comedy which is rooted in a doctrinaire outlook. A doctrinaire comedy cannot use laughter as its substance; it can operate on a scoff or a sneer, but not on hilarity. But life is even more cruel to the creators of *Private Benjamin:* they wound up with a caricature of comedy—a feat in itself, to be sure.

The script of *PB* is based on the immutable verity that all men are either idiots or lechers (even if they successfully mask it) or both—the last category being the hard core of the *PB's auteurs'* typology. The differentiation is only between pathetic idiots/lechers, menacing ones and creepy ones. As a subspecies to the idiot/lecher genus, we notice chauvinist loudmouths, mental robots, imbeciles and the animated pulp of ever-trotting soldiers. That's the sum total of the masculine variety of humankind. In healthy contrast to this dispiriting notion, women are good or bad, dumb or clever, motivated by feelings, ignominies of existence, sophisticated impulses and beautiful sentimentalities. Love-making, according to this vision of the world, consists of instant writhing, melancholic, expressive feminine sighs and bestial masculine grunts. What somehow evens out the analysis of both sexes' approach to love-making is the firm conviction of the authors that the simple proximity of males to females is enough reason immediately to jump into bed—or any other available facility.

Small wonder, in a comedy structured on such a deep vision of human affairs, that the only inducement to merriment is the heroine's aptitude for wrinkling her face, pouting her lips, grimacing and kvetching. Everything else elicits a sort of cackle from the audience, but never anything like that which we called laughter in the bygone eras of Chaplin and Keaton. After all, one is watching a Three Stooges routine re-enacted by a platoon of women. The singularly wooden hand of the director—who knows nothing about making a cinematic, let alone comedic, point in a given situation—makes this kind of entertainment unbearable.

One serious question emerges: is the movie a parody on the U.S. Army, or is the U.S. Army already a parody *tout court,* where sociosexual shenanigans à la *Screw* and *Ms.* magazine constitute its rationale? We have no answer to that. Besides, it's now Mr. Reagan's problem.

* * *

Watching this supposedly thoughtful piece of movie-making, one soon realizes that what stands for "people" in it is a peculiar breed, dispossessed of mankind's weighty prerogative: the human right to be both sensitive *and* sensible. In other words the people on the screen—rather decent and not particularly stupid—are somehow unable to distinguish between sensitivity and sensibility in dealing with each other. Which, after a while, acquires the dimension of a metaphor. Unfortunately, the symbolism is stale, if not rancid.

The youthful protagonist is traumatized by the loss of an older brother in a boating accident. His conscience is troubled, leading him first to attempt suicide, then to a psychiatric hospital and finally to a private psychoanalyst. He wants to regain control of himself, according to his own words. However, what he is really seeking from the doctor is love and acceptance, which he is getting only in a diluted way from his father and not at all from his mother, who rejects him, apparently for the simple reason that the drowned boy was her most beloved son. His is a valid quest, if somewhat minimalistic—neither love nor acceptance can ever quite bail out any thinking man from the quandaries of guilt and inadequacy. Religion, or any codified system of moral standards, might be of some help, but Redford's "ordinary people" of wealthy Chicago suburbia are fully detached from such spiritual guidelines. Quarter-of-a-million-dollar homes, golf and the pseudo-camaraderie of upper-class living must suffice for moral framework. They do have one philosophical recourse—psychology. Well-to-do tax lawyers do not ponder principles of human conditions, nor do they measure themselves against ethical truths. They believe in jargon; psychobabble is their liturgy. The young man's search for moral and emotional rehabilitation seems, in the beginning, quite honorable; his turning to a psychoanalyst for solace strikes an objective observer as a trivial letdown. In this world of fancy drawing rooms and blazers, nobody seems to have the resources to live his or her own life. Even the shrink, who initially appears to be a serious and trustworthy man, dives into platitudes once he begins to "help": suddenly, we are looking not at people, let alone ordinary people, but at stupid and vulgar features from the pages of *Esquire* and *New York* magazine. The

Liberal Culture

Sexology at Wayne

Wayne State University is a modern site of learning, so it has a sexologist, one Dr. Carole Marks. This scientist should not be taken lightly by nonsexologists, and we should all feel indebted to *New York* magazine, which reprinted her momentous discoveries. Among them:

> '. . . oral sex is far more likely to be practiced by political liberals . . .'

and

> Dr. Marks said there's a connection between political views and sex. 'Just as Democrats are more likely to favor the Equal Rights Amendment, so are they more likely to favor the woman-on-top position . . .'

The magnitude of the last observation is in its imposing simplicity. We wonder what long and strenuous research went into obtaining this dazzling conclusion. □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

stupidity swells when simple human terms are hopelessly mauled by the script, which presents the drama of communication in so-called ethnic stereotypes: WASPs are close-mouthed formalists, casualties of their behavioral mini-rules, the Jewish psychoanalyst is actually all warmth and understanding, even if he does exude all the charm and insight of a drill sergeant.

There is still one character in the movie who deserves a few words—the mother. Seen from her perspective, the film reads as a postscript to the 1960's. According to that decade's exegetes, the WASPish kids were justified in their rebellion against the rigidity and aridness of WASPish family culture. The breakdown of intrafamily communication had undermined the entire class structure, poisoned its ethos, turned it into lethal rot. If this movie is a correct illustration of how things really are within the very inner core of the WASPish family organism, I'd be an ardent supporter of the counterculture. But, just as the theory of the 1960's was erected on a modish lie, fraud and fallacy, so is the portrayal of the mother in *Ordinary People.* The mother is a villainess pushed into caricature and, as such, not valid. Countless WASPish parents have argued reasonably, over the last 20 years, against the centrifugal madness of their offspring, but to no avail. Years later, they had the bitter satisfaction of seeing their warnings materialize in their children's wretched destinies—in prisons, hospitals, drug rehabilitation centers. In fact, it was not the parents but the kids who refused to communicate, seduced by sleazy social theories or infatuated with imbecilic rock lyrics. And even if, in this movie, the kid is a sensitive (which does not mean sensible), well-intentioned, well-wishing young man who sings in the church choir and elicits friendships and good feelings, still he stubbornly refuses even to consider his mother's world of notions, tenets, principles or even to negotiate a compromise based on comprehension of the other—not too complex or refined, only different. And if the mother's principles at first seem shallow, pedestrian, perhaps even unprepossessing—they nevertheless are principles, thus a value, as valid and important as the most sensitive longing for love and acceptance. □

Stage

The Bard Bowdlerized

***A Midsummer Night's Dream;* Written by William Shakespeare; Adapted and directed by Stephen Willems; The Guthrie Theater.**

The Tyrone Guthrie Company, a theater group based in Minneapolis, is the pride of the Midwest—and justly so. It is credited with several outstanding productions, many exciting and innovative treatments of both old and modern repertory, and it recently acquired a well-known and inventive artistic director from Europe, Liviu Ciulei, under whom it was supposed to reach for new laurels.

We're sorry to report that what we saw as the commencement of Mr. Ciulei's tenure is far from acceptable; it simply makes little sense—and it could hardly pretend to enchant audiences. It is a so-called offbeat version of *Midsummer Night's Dream,* created on a mythical tropical island in a Hollywood art-deco reality—or rather surreality—of the 1930's. Thus, Titania is a sort of rich widow on vacation, Oberon something of a shady entrepreneur, Hermia, Helena, Demetrius and Lysander are clippings from Erté and *Vogue* of the time, Bottom is a janitor and Puck a quite robust deviate. The tradesmen aren't anything—they have been eliminated, thereby flattening unbearably Shakespeare's multileveled conception of the human universe.

There's nothing new about experiments which translate ancient art and drama into modernity: André Antoine did it before World War I, and Giraudoux wrote, in the 1920's, neoclassical tragedies in modern dialogue—he let Electra smoke Lucky Strikes and gave us Agamemnon in a tuxedo. About the same time, Erwin Piscator staged *Hamlet* as a psychoanalytical play, put Ophelia on the couch and offered the Prince of Denmark a drug cure. All that made sense: the Greek dramaturgists addressed themselves to the timeless man and could be rewritten at will; *Hamlet* is about schizophrenia, or at least it may be reasonably interpreted as such. But *Midsummer Night's Dream* is a fairy tale, inseparable from its own magic; to try to rationalize it makes no sense at all; Shakespeare rarely indulged in hallucinations, and he had no connection to pharmaceutically induced visions. *Midsummer Night's Dream* is not "about the difference between romantic illusion and real love," as the director of the Guthrie production, Mr. Stephen Willems, announces in the program; it's about the multitude of diverse consciousnesses. It is not about split personalities, but a split reality. It builds a cobweb of wisdom and eternal truth from fantasy, not ecstasy, from infatuations, not emotional simpering and poses. Its only links with the real world are tradespeople who try to construct a universe—made of lions and walls—that does not exist but that may exist: the tradesmen are relativists, which attests to their common sense and explains their eventual harmony with the fairies and elves. Above all, Shakespeare's play is poetic, not sentimental. And it's at this point that the work of the Bard was most sorely abused by the Guthrie people.

The acting was acceptable, and the stage set is charming. (ES) □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Art

Hopper at Whitney

The fact that Hopper's exhibition immediately follows Picasso's retrospective may be a source of musing. Without detracting from the Spaniard's position as a giant in his field we may ask (meekly, to be sure): Which of them better expresses our time, gives testimony to its poignancy? As we were leaving the Whitney Museum, we were not certain we would have an unambiguous answer. We know that to many cognoscenti such a comparison sounds blasphemous and insolent, but—having fresh in our eyes "Early Sunday Morning," "Nighthawks," all those New York town houses and all that solitary grief at paltry luncheonette tables—we somehow felt that there is more of a profound contemporary misery in these works than in the visual uproar of "Guernica."

However, it is a peculiar sadness, or poignancy, and although many see in it a condemnation of the American promise, we tend to see it as an expression of a shy and delicate love, a quaint patriotism of things heavy-hearted, a bittersweet devotion to the uniquely American moment of crepuscule, of feeling blue in the midst of an urban universe whose inexpressible melancholy does not cancel its preciousness, its sentimental intimacy. When looking at the work Edward Hopper did in France—the unremarkably postimpressionistic canvases—one can't help but think that only after he had found America again could something of poetry begin to move his hand. If we were to try to pinpoint the foremost art presentation of our epoch, Hopper's "Automat" (1927) might be our choice. If we had to choose an emblem of pictorial Americanism in modern painting, Hopper's "Self-Portrait" (1925-1930) would be, in our opinion, a strong contender. The romantic realism of American movies seems to have originated in Hopper's work. Very few artists have ever known, as Hopper did, how to use the poetry of the trite to express compassion and delicateness of emotions without resorting to the purely intellectual gimmicks of formalism. Hotel lobbies, boarding rooms, gas stations, commuter trains—all bathed in Hopper's green, neonlike lights—convey something which only time will elevate from excellence to greatness. We wouldn't be surprised if, in the future, "Nighthawks" is counted as the visual quintessence of 20th-century civilization—it shows that civilization's hermetic autonomousness of man is both his tragedy and his comfort.

Hopper's exhibition is a rousing success with the public: long lines form every morning on Madison Avenue and stretch around the block. "Figurative and representational art is already kosher in Gotham," said a bright young lady from New York who accompanied us. "People are no longer afraid to like a painting of a house, a street, a human being. A few years ago, it would be unthinkable to say in Manhattan that Hopper is an artist, not an illustrator . . ." So much for the New York cultural terror these days. (LT) □

Correspondence

Letter from Paris: The French "New Right"

by Thomas Molnar

I have known Alain de Benoist, ideological leader of the New Right ("Nouvelle Droite," hence ND), for some fifteen years, which means he was about twenty when we first met. He is not at all like the *maîtres à penser* of previous intellectual movements; he is neither pompous nor *abscons* (abstruse). He is a modest and amiable man with a sense of humor and a hearty laugh. His emergence as the "leader of reaction"—a reputation created Europe-wide by the media—surprises him because he does not think of himself as a rightist. On the contrary, Benoist has mostly contempt for the "old right," in France and elsewhere, describing it as fossilized, narrowly nationalistic, opposed to change and to ideological debate.

You might say this is leftist rhetoric. Yes and no. One cause of ND's rapid expansion over Europe is the fusion of some right-wing arguments with some left-wing ones. The common platform is anticapitalist and anti-Soviet, cultural discontent with the consumer-cum-leisure society, and the search for an "elsewhere" (*ailleurs*) away from the clichés of "Western civilization" with its verbal emphasis on the "Judeo-Christian heritage." Whatever else the university rebellion of 1968 achieved, its main result in retrospect was the blurring of the habitual Weltanschauung formulas in Europe's most original minds, many of them of Benoist's generation. When Maurice Clavel, who died last year at 55, first announced (in 1968) the passing of the age of rationalistic enlightenment *and* bourgeois values, he was helping strikers in the Lip watch-manufacturing company. Soon he emerged as an extremely effective publicist and television debater for Catholic orthodoxy, covering with sarcasm both progressive and

Dr. Molnar teaches at New York University when he is not traveling.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Marxoid clergy.

Such a combination may strike the American reader as rather odd; yet these seeming paradoxes characterize the effervescent French climate, in which intellectual questioning and counter-questioning thrive. There is a similar contradiction behind ND's popularity. The followers are mostly young people from bourgeois Catholic-rightist families, students, bureaucrats, professionals, journalists, who feel let down not only by the repeated failures of the Maurrassian right, but also by the failure of the Church to block the cultural-political conquest of leftism. They reach out for a new synthesis of anti-egalitarianism, modernity in art and literary forms, the rediscovery of pagan myths and the search for the underlying unity of diverse civilizational structures. The movement has efficiently caught these aspirations and made of them a more-or-less coherent bundle, not quite a system, let alone a philosophy—an ideology, perhaps. ND's intellectual leaders have attached themselves to an impressive array of thinkers and writers who now willingly admit their connection with ND, write for its increasingly numerous publications and attend its international congresses. The ND claims as collaborators and sympathizers men like Ionesco, Arthur Koestler, Jencks, Eysenck, Konrad Lorenz and Mircea Eliade.

Perhaps strangely for a movement labeled "rightist," the initial thrust is aimed at the Christian religion. This is almost a personal crusade for Benoist, although once I heard him brilliantly pin down a fashionable Dominican who had just uttered a chain of modernist nonsense. Benoist has offered an outlet to people, young and old, with an accumulated bitterness against the Church. Professor Louis Rougier, the grand old man of ND, argues, like the Roman Celsus in the 2nd century and later Voltaire, that Christian metaphysics undermined the pagan speculative enterprise and its title to glory, humanistic rationalism. Following Rougier, and Nietzsche, the younger ND thinkers add that Christianity is only one among the many *myths,* in fact inferior to most others in that it has spawned a slave morality, and quite logically in modern times, has surrendered to permissive liberalism and its twin, totalitarian socialism.

Emancipation from Christianity establishes ND's radical credentials and it is looked upon as a new beginning for Europe. The movement is not primarily interested in socioeconomics or even politics, and this helps its cause with disenchanted new leftists and depoliticized youths. Its focus is on *civilization,* primarily the restoration of Europe—free of America, Russia and the Christian interlude. The modalities of this return to Europe's genuine self are only vaguely outlined. ND's position appears sane and constructive as long as it criticizes the Freudian postulates in the family, the antielitist bias in schools, the mindless egalitarianism of public life, the stereotyped left-lib discourse in domestic policy and international relations. Things get rougher—and more naively utopian—when the preconditions of change are formulated in biomanipulative terms.

They are obviously not what Louis Pauwels, *Figaro's* cultural editor, had in mind as ideal Europeans when he excoriated Christianity and bowed to Voltaire and Rougier. Yet, ND's enthusiasm for a new era of new men catches the fancy of many young men and women across the continent. No matter where I traveled I met inquiring people wanting to know more about the New Right and Alain de Benoist. In Spain the young men who advise the center-rightist Allianza Popular are all friends of ND and eager for recent news of Benoist. In Italy the movement has now a sister organization with two or three publications involved in anti-Marxist studies and anti-Christian propaganda. In Portugal and Greece young lawyers, students and journalists have formed ND associations; the same is true in the Scandinavian countries and in Belgium. In Munich I listened to a prime-time television report on ND and its German sympathizers, chief among them Armin Mohler, a national conservative ostracized by the academic community.

I have said that ND's impact is primarily on impatient and talented young people who have had their fill of leftist professors, de-nationalized media and one-sided publishing policy. In the wasteland of left-liberal-censored cultural life they have set up their own pub-

Liberal Culture

Pearls of Wisdom

Ms. Shirley MacLaine in a recent interview with *Women's Wear Daily:*

> . . . what is a bigger problem today than human sexuality? Except inflation. If Richard Nixon had not been sexually repressed, he wouldn't have had to bomb Vietnam or Cambodia.

How does she know that Nixon is sexually repressed? Why doesn't she come up with some substantiations? Or did she just read about it in the newspapers? She continues:

> The more sex becomes a non-issue in people's lives, the happier they are.

Is that so? It always seemed to us that the more meaningful sexuality becomes, the more occasion for happiness, while sexual torpor can lead to suicides. Ms. MacLaine's comments can be read in *WWD's* "Arts & People" section. What do her words have in common with either art or people? □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lications, bringing forth a new intellectual network. They do not mind the mostly adverse publicity (which at least allows them to leave the ghetto in which the old right has been quarantined). A youth international is thus in the making, and there is nothing similar on the left, where militant youth are tied to political parties or red brigades.

The ND is not attached to any political party since it scorns the democratic, parliamentary, electoral game and insists on the individual's uniqueness. Naturally, this is not *liberal* individualism; its roots are philosophical nominalism, the thesis that only the *single* exists —men, things, concepts—and that we are not authorized to invent new entities by conveniently extrapolating ideas into the world of reality. Such a procedure, the guardians of ND ideology assert, leads to gratuitous affirmations, absolutist doctrines and finally to totalitarian constructs. Example: the gratuitous concept of "God" grouping the multitude of forces in nature and man (far more adequately expressed by polytheism), has authorized throughout history the domination of One Master, One Party, One Class, One Ideology. The return to *many* religions and to polytheism would bring with it tolerance, rational judgment as arbiter of conflict and debate, the blooming of a thousand flowers.

Once in a German periodical, I argued against Mohler that if his political conservatism is seriously held, he must acknowledge that State and institutions are not *flatus vocis,* not mere contractual conveniences, but that they possess *being,* that they are *real.* Otherwise why oppose revolution, anarchy and progressivism which aims at destruction or perpetual change? Mohler and ND took the opportunity to reaffirm their belief that the realist position on the universals tempts thinkers to formulate dogmas, so that *in fine* I was in the same class as Marx! *They* remained enlightened, rational, tolerant . . .

This shortness of speculative breath turns ND into an ad-hoc ideology, despite its paganism and right-wing utopianism. What does ND offer to people in general? It offers some of the best and most courageous analyses in the French press and book market. Since they have been semiofficially ostracized, ND intellectuals can afford to call the emperor naked, to call the bluff of the left-liberal orthodoxy. ND offers an *alternative* in content, approach and style, which, far from being primitive and negative, is sophisticated, original and usually (when religion is not involved) balanced. Their enemies are less forgiving on the right than on the left. New leftists may sympathize, since they, too, have been targets of attack by communists and socialists; the "integrist" right focuses on ND's paganism with hatred and scorn. One reason for the suspicion surrounding ND is its impact and success. A nonapologetic, intellectually up-to-date right has emerged; they have well-publicized and well-attended congresses, a growing number of publications (some of a very high caliber), dailies, weeklies and periodicals, publishing houses and an intellectual network of like-minded writers, critics, scholars. Translated into American terms, it is as if the *Washington Post* had passed into Buckley's hands, Cronkite had been replaced by a neoconservative, Random House published traditional books, and I.S.I. and Rockford Institute writers were regularly invited to television panels to challenge spokesmen from the *New York Review of Books.*

Does an ND specter haunt the culture-makers of Europe; does Benoist organize coups d'état for elitist regimes? The answer is no; groups of intelligent and courageous men, mostly between 20 and 40, have enriched the cause of nonconformism with a new style, looking at the world from some new angles. The uproar around them is mostly sparked by amazement that they dared. □

Letter from New York:
Atonality and *Der Blaue Reiter*

by Joshua Gilder

It's hard to hear Arnold Schoenberg's music for what it is, what with the composer's status on the one hand as the chief perpetrator of the agony of modern music, and as the epitome of the misunderstood genius, years ahead of his time and audience, on the other. In this regard the performance of *Pierrot Lunaire* by the Orchestra of Our Time (Joel Thome, conductor), staged in conjunction with the Guggenheim's German expressionism show, made a point. Schoenberg's music is in striking harmony (or discord?) with the German expressionist painters, with whom, in fact, he often exhibited his own (truly awful) paintings. Audiences will never "catch up" to Schoenberg because he was too much an expression of his time, and that time is in the past; the fashionable angst of turn-of-the-century Germany has taken on a dated look.

Too often Schoenberg is considered for his revolutionary formal innovations while the heavily laden emotional content of his work is ignored. I suspect many attribute their dislike of his music to its atonality, or serialization, which they consider artificial and unexpressive, when it is precisely the expressive quality of the music that is rubbing them the wrong way.

No matter how much one may admire Schoenberg's music—and it's impossible to listen to it closely and not admire it—one may have trouble coming to terms with the morbid, claustrophobic,

Mr. Gilder is associate editor of Saturday Review.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

obsessional world it describes. This makes a performance of *Pierrot Lunaire* a curious and often frustrating event because coexisting with its naked pathology is an exciting musical experience. Still evident at this time is Schoenberg's talent for lyrical melody, apparent in his early works *(Gurre-Lieder).* Half-strangled in *Pierrot* by the dramatic but musically limited *Sprechstimme* vocalization, and, in his serial pieces, diffused and scattered on an aesthetic treadmill, this lyrical talent is nevertheless one of Schoenberg's most profound qualities. It may help to explain how he imagined he could invent a music exclusively composed of melody, forsaking the support of harmony.

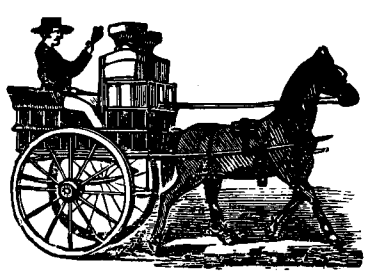
Every element of *Pierrot* is masterfully crafted: Each moment is a gem, perfectly formed and cut with a thousand facets. As Schoenberg's music disintegrated harmonically it also became increasingly miniaturized, especially his short piano pieces. Some as short as twenty seconds, these pieces are like crystallized symphonies. This sort of music demands a different way of listening. It may explain why Schoenberg tends to command a greater respect among musicians, who have the advantage of being able to play the music over and over again, than among the lay audience, for whom its glittering intricacies may not be as accessible. Another difficulty is that Schoenberg never solved the problem of writing in an extended form. At times he is brilliant, but, strung together, these moments (sparkling as they are) lose their variety. A long series of startling events soon becomes only a generalized feeling of disturbance. *Pierrot,* after a half-hour or so, begins to feel yawningly monochromatic.

The Orchestra of Our Time played well, and Maureen McNalley talked/sang her *Sprechstimme* reciter's role with a fine sense of the dramatic, the most important element in keeping this piece alive. The lighting was cabaret-like, therefore appropriate, and made effective use of limited resources. Pianist Dwight Peltzer milked the lush, romantic texture of Berg's Piano Sonata Opus 1 for everything it had.

* * *

As I wound my way up the Guggenheim's spiral ramp, past the prints and drawings that looked like set designs for *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari,* I was struck by the programmatic similarity between Erich Heckel's "Spring in Flanders" and one of the poems in *Pierrot Lunaire.* In *"Enthauptung"* ("Beheading") Pierrot, hallucinating as usual, visualizes the crescent moon as a scimitar's blade and fears it will decapitate him. Heckel's "Spring" is an early spring before life returns to nature. A lone, bundled peasant makes his way up a country road, the trees on either side twisted and crippled, the fields flooded in an early thaw. The sky is one of those contradictory skies that is at the same time both lowering and bright, with a blue almost malign in its intensity. It appears hard and brittle, composed of the splinters of fractured glass. The peasant stoops beneath this blue horror that threatens at any moment to cut him to pieces. Why, for these expressionists, is nature so hostile?

If one were sentimentally inclined one might suggest that nature was rebelling against the outrageous uses to which it was being put. The expressionists had little interest in the objective world as such; it existed only to give a kind of form to their emoting. Even in the landscapes, very little of nature survives expressionist handling; all that remains visible is the vague contour of the natural world, buried under several layers of expressive paint.



If they've interred nature, it's because to them it is a dead thing; they can no longer find meaning there. Their inspiration springs full-grown from the claustrophobic recesses of the mind; it is the product of an unconscious that has been artificially sealed off from the fresh air of objective reality to see what lurid, anaerobic growth will result.

Looking at the fiery surfaces of some of these paintings, one is tempted to compare them to those of van Gogh. Van Gogh's is a world of fire, yet it's a fire that never consumes. His vision is always *mediated* through the object of contemplation. A flower may be a vision of heaven or of hell, but it is always a flower. There is no mediation in expressionism—only imposition. Because the world of the expressionists is dark and dead, they have to set it on fire to bring it alive.

Kandinsky appears in the show, as I suppose is historically appropriate in that, for polemical purposes at least, he was allied with the movement. But in no real sense is Kandinsky German (he was born in Russia and only moved to Germany in his thirtieth year, and then not permanently), and no artist could be more different in spirit. Even at his most abstract, Kandinsky's painting is informed by his love of the natural world. Perhaps as gifted a writer as he was a painter, he expresses that primary affirmation in this eloquent passage from his reminiscences:

> Like all children, I was passionately fond of 'riding.' For this purpose our coachman used to cut spiral stripes on thin branches, peeling both layers of bark off the first stripe and only the top layer from the second, so that my horse usually consisted of three colors: the brownish yellow of the outer bark (which I did not like and would gladly have seen replaced by another), the juicy green of the underlayer of the bark (which I especially

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

liked and which in withered condition still had something enchanting about it) and finally the color of the ivory white wood of the stick (that smelled damp and tempted one to lick it, but soon became sadly shrivelled and dry, which spoiled my pleasure in this white from the very beginning).

Many people have drawn a parallel between Schoenberg's atonality and Kandinsky's move to abstract, nonobjective painting. There is something to this, of course, but the *dis*similarities of purpose outweigh the superficial resemblance. Kandinsky's abstraction was always a form of play, it was always joyful; Schoenberg's was a form of aggression. (Soon after "discovering" the 12-tone system Schoenberg wrote to a friend that his new invention would secure the dominance of German music for the next one hundred years.) The parallel also breaks down with the obvious point that all music is entirely abstract. Kandinsky and other abstractionists talked of emulating music, but it was more likely Mozart they were thinking of, not Schoenberg.

Kandinsky edited a paper with Franz Marc, but all one can conclude from this is that politics, even aesthetic politics, makes strange bedfellows. So beside Kandinsky's brilliant experiments is Franz's tumescent erotic reverie, "The Large Blue Horses"; and a bit farther along his other animal paintings that look like cubist children's book illustrations.

I suppose one can't write about German expressionism without mentioning Emile Nolde. Having done that and gotten him out of the way, I can walk by Ludwig Meidner's "Apocalyptic Landscape," roll down the ramp past George Grosz's piglike industrialists rooting around with their piglike prostitutes, and find something very delicate and very beautiful growing—and barely surviving—in the corrupted soil of German expressionism. It is the self-portrait of Paula Modersohn-Becker. She paints herself in reddish-browns, browns and ochers, and the eyes are heavy-lidded, suggesting depression and insomnia. It might almost seem to be of the same clay-bound sentiment as the other expressionists, but the picture is suffused with the light of a subdued, almost religious joy. A turquoise, like stained glass, radiates from around her as sense of grace. Before her breast she holds a sprig of green resembling one of Matisse's palms. Her "Still Life with Oranges and Stone Dog" is appealing with its colors of a happy childhood (the blue stone dog and the pink around the rim of the flower pot really clinch this one), and "Poorhouse Woman at Duck-pond" comes right out of a Grimm tale.

These pictures are childlike in their simplicity, perhaps even a bit childish, a retreat from the ravages of her life into a remembered happiness. Her "Reclining Nude," however, has a full-grown, full-bodied female sensuality—she obviously has an appreciation for it. The surface, though, is a swirl of clotted paint; an attractive picture lies below a positively grisly texture, as if the canvas were covered with thorns. Perhaps for some a bed of thorns is the only comfortable place to lie. □

The American Proscenium

What Happened in November 1980?

By electing Ronald Reagan President and putting a new Republican majority into the Senate, the American nation (unique in the history of mankind by dint of its composition and institutions) proved once again that it is mentally and socially healthy at its core and, as such, it remains humanity's best hope, its highest exemplar. As of now, Ronald Reagan and the Republican Party represent the values and principles which have made this polity and this society a yardstick for human success on this planet. The simple fact is that at an historical crossroad of this country, its people have given an unequivocal mandate to the forces of reason, social dynamism and moral integrity. They withstood the tremendous pressures of the reigning political and opinion-shaping establishment. This formidable power, which has ruled America and the minds of Americans for most of this century, is dedicated to the relentless eradication of the rudiments of American success, to tampering with the American tradition of self-governance, to the revision of the most rewarding American spiritual incentives. It has done so in the name of honest but ill-conceived idealism, the main tendency of which is to perceive human and civic good not in the will of the people—the fundamental American tenet—but in theoretical prescriptions for social justice. The end result of these prescriptions would be to give government an uncontrolled franchise for regulating human lives via coercion.

The Republican landslide of 1980 was a victorious battle, but it was only a *political* triumph. The cultural war for the American soul is still going on, and its fierceness will increase. The politically defeated side is in command of awesome weapons: it still rules the media, higher education, the entertainment industry. It will do everything possible to reverse the political tide with the help of an all-out cultural counteroffensive in which the end will justify any means. The first taste of what we can expect was in the postelectoral speech of outgoing Vice President Walter Mondale, a probable Democratic Presidential candidate in 1984. It was an ugly elocution, somehow incompatible with the image of fairness and intellectual maturity assigned to Mr. Mondale by the omnipotent liberal media. Speaking for the losing party, Mr. Mondale claimed that the victory of Republican conservatism was a manipulation of people's preferences by some unnamed big-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

money sources. Such an accusation sounds strange coming from the mouth of a spokesman for a political elite whose highest-powered gears of political hegemony have depended for at least half a century on the fabulous financial contributions of big labor unions and on the ideological colorblindness of multinational corporations. The money that helped to unseat liberal engineers of human life in the Senate came overwhelmingly from small donations of ordinary citizens. As a recipient of enormous donations, Mr. Mondale is perhaps unaware of the fact that a more democratic form of political fund-raising has emerged during the last two decades. It's called direct-mail soliciting; its contributions consist mostly of the conservative widow's mite, and it mightily helped to evict Messrs. Church, Culver and McGovern from the Senate. To us, it seems immoral to bail out Chrysler Corporation with the taxpayers' money and then to take advantage of such an act of "social compassion" in order to pump up the Democratic Party's muscle. Mr. Mondale should know that; it has a lot to do with the Republican victory.

And then, to reassure us that we live in a world where evil can no longer be slain like St. George's dragon, on Wednesday, November 5, 1980 the *New York Times* brought us an article by Mr. James Reston—that impeccable, reliable butler of the Eastern Liberal Establishment. The article stated promptly and unambiguously that the American nation had been robbed of its soul, spirit, future and hope—that it is now the "Forgotten Nation." Mr. Reston asserted that the election ". . . left the winners with no clear mandate." No mention that Mr. Reagan scored one of the most overwhelming electoral wins in American history. Not one word about how the nation clearly and unequivocally expressed a wish to dump the liberals' prayer wheels—so dear to the *New York Times*—into history's dustbin. Reading Mr. Reston, one could be forgiven for thinking that Mr. Reagan and Mr. D'Amato must have been thrust into power by a Chilean junta and California's Hell's Angels right before the eyes of 200,000,000 gagged and bound Americans. One might have thought that several crosses had been erected on which Messrs. Sulzberger, Rosenthal and Wicker had breathed their last, surrounded by the goried heads of Senators McGovern, Church, Bayh, Culver, *et alia* impaled on spears bearing Made-in-Korea trademarks.

Perhaps what Mr. Reagan can expect from the perversity of the American media *anno* 1980 is best illustrated by the *Chicago Tribune,* a newspaper which endorsed Mr. Reagan for the Presidency. They immediately reprinted Mr. Reston's column in the same November 6 issue which carried a story in which we could read the words of a humble little Chicagoan interviewed on the very same day that Mr. Reston dipped his pen in smelly bile:

> The guys on television last night, they acted surprised. But who've they been talking to? . . . They'd better get off their butts and get among the multitude. They'd better listen . . . Last night, in a couple of these joints, these neighborhood taverns, they went bananas. Yes, Democrats. They all stood up and sang 'God Bless America.'
>
> Me, I'm a liberal, but you know what I did? I went out in the street and sang the first verse of the Marine anthem. It was just in me. It came out. That's what came out of all of the people on election day . . .

This was the election Mr. Reston considers stolen from the American people. Some would have called his *oeuvre* scurrilous; we think it was predictable. With his article, the Liberal Establishment's flagship—the *Times*—has fired the opening salvo. The battle is on. No honeymoon for Mr. Reagan.

No Honeymoon for Mr. Reagan

Within a couple of weeks after election night, the hastily worked-out consensus of the liberal media had been reached and put into operation. Here are some highlights of the blueprint for their exegesis and a preview of what is to come:

—Reagan did not win—Carter lost.

—It was a protest vote against Khomeini, not against the last half-century of liberal sociomoral order (or disorder).

—The liberal angst justifies resorting to any vilification possible, for example:

Reagan will cut subsidies regardless of need (Reagan consistently speaks of cutting the budgets of the *bureaucracies* which manage the subsidies).

Reagan's friends are fanatical anti-Semites (the person accused of this sin by the *Los Angeles Herald-Examiner* was later proven to be Jewish).

Reagan's aides are homicidal fascists (CBS conducted an interview with Professor Jeane Kirkpatrick in which she was not allowed to explain what she meant by "repressive regimes"; CBS made her look like an advocate of repression).

The Moral Majority is a nucleus of American nazism (consider this ditty in a Gannett provincial newspaper: "And if you're black or Jewish, you need not apply . . . ./But white Aryan patriots step quickly to the fore,/The Moral Majority's drafting you and sending you to war . . . ").

—The liberal postelection neurasthenia permits all kinds of hallucinatory "advice" which, oddly enough, sounds almost like threats, for example:

Mr. Bill Moyer's ravings on election night, the gist of which was that Reagan won because the people did *not* think he was a conservative, but

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

if he persists in being one, something will happen to his Presidency (something Nixonian, we presume.

The CBS-*New York Times* poll (as if polls were not the laughingstock of *this* event) taken two weeks after the election which found out (with the help of subtly contrived questions) that Mr. Reagan had better be a meek and humble moderate and not dare to implement the ideas for which he got a clear mandate from the voters if he wants to finish his term in peace and harmony with the "people" who were polled (what "people" the Sixth Avenue Manhattan pollster had in mind remains unsaid).

Mr. Anderson

Mr. Anderson—who, as we now see clearly, was entirely fabricated by the liberal media and a group of Hollywood radic-lib millionaires and pushed, via the television screen, into American households as a crossbreed of the Illinois version of the Maid of Orleans and the Capitol Hill version of Plato (originator of ideas)—performed 50 percent *worse* than George Wallace did in 1968. Had George Wallace received the kind of frantic support from the media that Mr. Anderson had, Mr. Wallace very likely would have gone for two terms to the White House—wheelchair or not.

Suggestion

The American media have gone bananas giving advice to the new President. As a rule they tell him what he should do. We think it beneath our dignity to advise when we are not asked to. But we would like to suggest something.

It's already obvious that the liberal and radical opinion outlets are exerting themselves to cast Nancy Reagan into a Marie Antoinette role. Already there are voices predicting, with lethal sarcasm, the waltzing and reveling which will go on in the new White House under the auspices of a lady who's sort of infatuated with the tinsel and gloss of the American Versailles. They call it a "Glen Miller Presidency"—and the venom contained in this appellation far exceeds the routine scorn. Nancy Reagan, according to well-wishers in the gossip columns of Manhattan publications, is supposed to pirouette over the worst outburst of inflation in the nation's history, surrounded by Adolpho-clad ladies and gentlemen in long tails, among buffet tables covered with the most refined hors d'oeuvres, while the people will not be able to afford a McDonald's cheeseburger.

We would be glad if Mrs. Reagan would find ways to render the liberal lust for *Schadenfreude* moot.

Mega-Abortion

In the *Village Voice* of November 19, 1980, two full months before Mr. Reagan's inauguration, a bemused reader could contemplate an ad:

IMPEACH REAGAN

Organize now. Info: Write Impeach Reagan POB 1604, Camden, NJ 08101. □

Journalism

The World of *The Nation*

The Nation is America's oldest journal of opinion. It has always been committed to progress, or to what its publishers and editors see as progress. As such, it coalesced progressives from both the populist spheres of the American culture and the privileged oligarchy, plutocracy, establishment. The populists supplied the ideas, the oligarchy the money—they were unified by what was once called the communion of enlightenment, and is now called intellectuality.

Today, *The Nation* is not only progressive but also *gauchiste*. This means it espouses radically leftish notions in politics and culture without being moored in any codified, sectarian formula. A furtive peek at the masthead suffices to determine that the scions of the former New England and New York patriciate may still be providing the money. This enables *The Nation* not only to promote the subversion of domestic institutions that are still cherished by simple-minded Americans but, first and foremost, to undermine freedom in the world and facilitate the communist conquest of this planet. Why the descendants of Manhattan bankers and Boston Brahmins would do such a thing is an arch-American riddle.

The world of *The Nation* is one in which free enterprise is an impoverishing agent and Israelis are always aggressors. In its world, for any crime committed by Castro, Manley, Allende or Mugabe there is an explanation couched in blue-ribbon relativism. Nothing, perhaps, better exemplifies the classic, rampant, liberal Tartuffery of *The Nation* than a recent article on Uruguay: it bewails the calamities of that country's ruling junta, which has brought down what was "once a peaceful democratic welfare state . . . known . . . for its democratic stability." Nowhere in the text could one find a word about the Tupamaros — the vicious, radical new-leftist gang composed mostly of the jaded offspring of the wealthy and the middle class—who turned life in Uruguay, during the 70's, into an anarchic nightmare of bestial terror and endless killing. *The Nation* does not pay attention to such details of history as the origins of military dictatorships.

The Nation's ideological dialectic is rather like the call-and-response structure of a gospel hymn or a blues. You say "America," and the editors lament, "Imperialism"; you say "Lenin," and the choir bewails, "Good intentions, but *helás!*"; you say, "Middle Class," and they sob, "Reactionary oppression!" Every issue exudes a sort of spiritual incense, fumes which emanate from the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

way they handle words like "liberal," "compassion," "decency" and "justice."

The Nation piously believes that immorality is programmed into capitalism; that Soviet Russia is an honorable adversary who never lies to us, while we always lie to her; that the CIA stinks because it defends a rotten order (which happens to be *our* order); that nuclear energy is demonic when it serves *our* economy, while the nuclear efforts of the communist countries remain unbespoken. Countless words have been devoted to the murderousness of diverse Latin American juntas. We failed to notice any unequivocal condemnation of *left*-wing terrorism in Italy, Germany or Argentina.

The journal is very picky, too, when it comes to governments. If a democratic majority votes liberals and leftists into office anywhere in the world, *The Nation* finds nothing wrong with government's bigness, autocracy, even tyranny: such a government, by the journalist's fiat, serves some moral purpose. However, wherever a government is in the hands of right-of-center moderates or conservatives, even if they were duly elected by a democratic majority, that government should be crippled, sabotaged, undermined *à tout prix,* using whatever help is available from America's worst foes.

Here is a small potpourri of *The Nation's* more salient opinions on a variety of subjects.

On American conservatism:

> . . . conservative thought and practice is shot through with antihumanist ideas and beliefs . . . According to the conservatives, the market system should be left to work its will, unchecked, as it did in the United States up until the 1930's . . . favoring the rich, expanding unemployment and *depending upon military force to keep order.* (Emphasis added)
>
> —Mr. Marcus G. Raskin, cofounder of the Institute for Policy Studies and a member of *The Nation's* editorial board

On J. Edgar Hoover:

> Hoover, on the other hand, was a natural fascist, a fascist by intellectual chemistry and temperament and instinct and gut passion. His record clearly says that he was an ideological pervert. His faith was in the powers of darkness.
>
> —Mr. Robert Sherrill, *The Nation's* White House correspondent

On American politics:

> Politics are confused and corrupted, however, not just because of the cultural and social heterogeneity of our nation, or its moral failings. They are in disrepair, perhaps fatal disrepair, because of the demoralization of our political community by forces derived from the market.
>
> —Professor Norman Birnbaum *The Nation's* editorial board

On *Seven Days,* a recently defunct, openly procommunist, pro-Soviet and pro-Cuban magazine whose list of subscribers has been transferred to *The Nation:*

> *The Nation,* America's oldest weekly journal, is best suited to carry on *Seven Days'* ambitious mission.
>
> —from an editorial

On the sponsors of PBS-TV series:

> But it is precisely this benign public view of foundations that has made them increasingly attractive 'neutral' sponsors for controversial public television shows. Corporations and institutions whose images are tarnished now seek such 'neutral' intermediaries to convey their views.
>
> —John S. Friedman in an article financed by the Fund for Investigative Journalism

On *The Nation's* more notorious contributors:

> Victor Marchetti's first report from inside the CIA appeared in *The Nation.*
>
> 'The Safe Car You Can't Buy'—written for *The Nation* in 1956 when Nader was still a Harvard law student.
>
> More than two years before the overthrow of Batista's regime, Castro explained to *Nation* readers 'What the Cuban Revolutionaries Want.'
>
> —from *The Nation's* promotional leaflet

On communism in the United States:

> Historians are still debating the origins of the cold war, but the idea that Communism or the Communist Party presented an internal threat during those years was a hoax. Carey McWilliams, editor of this journal from 1955 to 1975, was among the first to label it as such.
>
> —from an editorial

Addendum: A letter to the editor, mourning the passing away of Mr. Carey McWilliams in 1980, defines his political position:

> He, better than anyone, lived up to that fine slogan of the French Popular Front of 1934: No enemies to the left of us.
>
> —Harold J. Salemson

On a certain Louis Wolf, publisher of *Covert Action Information Bulletin,* a publication which targets CIA operatives abroad for assassination by international terrorists:

> When a man is as universally beleaguered as the editor of *Covert Action,* it seems to us worth defending his civil liberties without going through the ritual of condemning activities whose genesis is, in any event, more complicated than Morris Abram's letter would suggest.
>
> —from an editorial reply in the "Letters" section, signed: The Editors (of *The Nation*)

On America:

> To the degree that America is divided,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

disrupted and disunified, the world is that much safer.

—Professor Alan Wolfe, *The Nation's* editorial board

We have refrained from any comments on the opinions expressed above. The sheer scurrilousness of the last one, however, requires a response. We think it proper to cede the answer to Professor Raymond Aron, the famous French scholar and humanist, who once wrote:

> How could I as a Frenchman of Jewish origin, ever forget that France owes its liberation to the power of its allies, and that Israel owes its existence to its weapons and any chance of survival to its own determination, and that of the Americans, to fight if it proves necessary. □

Gurus & Pundits

A certain Morton Kondracke, *The New Republic's* political oracle who is addicted to predictions (which, from the time Mr. Bush announced his candidacy, have been all wrong), evaluating the Reagan-Carter debate and its consequences in the pre-election edition of his organ:

> I'm not saying that Carter's victory on points will win him the election, but I think if anyone gains politically from the Tuesday night matchup, it will be Carter.

A local superbrain in a provincial Gannett daily comments on the scope of Reagan's victory:

> The proportions of Reagan's victory are somewhat mitigated by what we call a 'Rio Grande factor.' His popularity among voters has been shown to be miles wide, but may also be only inches deep. Like the Rio Grande.

Morris Udall, the Congressman from Arizona, on the same subject:

> The Reagan landslide is very deep and very broad. The pendulum swings.

A certain Ronald Steel, *The New Republic's* newest mastermind of foreign-policy expertise:

> . . . the Carter team has been sophisticated in its approach. It has tried to work with revolutionary nationalists rather than driving them to the Soviets as their only source of support.

And Carter succeeded brilliantly—in Ethiopia, Nicaragua, South Yemen. The Steels of the world never learn—one may only sigh helplessly. Why is it that the revolutionary nationalists, no matter how closely we work with them, always end up in the arms of Brezhnev and KGB instructors? The same sage announces:

> For several years the new right has been spreading the message that the Russians are intent on gobbling up the world and that they now (or soon will) have the means to do so.

Don't they? They say so, at least in their school books and communist catechisms. □

Liberal Logic

In the wake of the last election a certain Mr. Hendrick Smith, the *New York Times's* chief expert on Russia, muses about differences between Ronald Reagan and Leonid Brezhnev. He finds very few—in his opinion, both men are conservative pragmatists: "both men have been more pragmatic and flexible than their rhetoric suggests." Mr. Smith asserts that "Brezhnev marched Soviet troops into Czechoslovakia when he felt vital Soviet interests were at stake . . . But with the instinctive conservatism of the Soviet elders who disclaim recklessness . . . has acted more cautiously than he sounded . . ." However, Reagan apparently is a bit less of a lily-white conservative and pragmatist than Brezhnev: "Reagan's most risky and controversial advocacy of the use of force has been his persistent call for a naval blockade of Cuba . . ."

We face here a hopeless muddle of notions; it is so entangled that many would feel justified in calling Mr. Smith's reasoning either idiotic or traitorous—or both. Why is suppressing freedom in Czechoslovakia considered an act of pragmatic conservatism and the eventual undoing of Castro's tyranny characterized as risky, controversial and irresponsible? Why is Czechoslovakia's independence a threat to vital Russian interests, while Cuban communists 70 miles from Florida's shores do not threaten American concerns? At that point the editors of the *Times* would smile haughtily, deploring our lack of subtlety in world affairs, but we know as well as they do that Cuba is no ideological threat to American liberty, while a free Czechoslovakia would be an ideological threat to Soviet totalitarianism. What we object to is the *Times'* smug, heinous principle which makes it proper to defend tyranny, oppression and brute force in global politics by conferring upon them a custom-made denomination of pragmatic conservatism. □

In the Mail

Those Gasoline Lines and How They Got There **by H. A. Merklein and William P. Murchison, Jr.; The Fisher Institute; Dallas, Texas.** An energy economist and a syndicated newspaper journalist combine their talents in a scathing attack on government energy policy.

Shakespeare's Julius Caesar: A Production Collection **by B. S. Field, Jr.; Nelson-Hall; Chicago, Illinois.** Comments by eighteen actors and directors in seven different productions, illustrated with 101 photographs.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Liberal Culture

John Lennon RIP

The death of John Lennon and its immediate aftermath exposed some bizarre coefficients of our reality which are clear and obvious only to, and easily synthesized by, the bogus sages of the *New York Times, Time* magazine and *Mother Jones.* Certainly, any senseless death is utterly deplorable; any disjointed act of violence is condemnable; any such killing should be penalized by severe criminal sentences. We firmly believe that the world was a much better place when screwballs were expected to pay the full price for their neuroses, when capital punishment was meted out to the demented perpetrator of abject cruelty on the assumption that even one who is consumed by psychotic rage is not exempt from fundamental human responsibilities.

Yet the Lennon murder has some sad and sordid connotations. Mr. Lennon was a victim of certain propensities which, after all, he himself mightily helped to install in human souls. He was one of those miniprophets, theorists and ebullient practitioners of a subculture of unleashed immaturity whose final perversion led to ideologies of nihilism, radical politics, orgiastic release of any instinct or vice; a sociocultural trend in which pastoral imbecility, sophomoric vulgarity and speciously beautified slogans converged to corrupt minds and to warp existences. Granted, Mr. Lennon was hardly the worst among the shining beacons of that era, but we doubt that he exerted himself to warn his followers and admirers—if he was perspicacious enough to realize it—that at the end of their road waited the specters of Manson and Jonestown and Son of Sam. Abstract bestiality and motiveless crime is inherently and intimately linked to the acceptance of limitless transgression that may begin innocently with caricatural hair styles. Mr. Lennon's was an age of allegedly noble sentiments, tender sensitivities fully awakened in America for the first time. Actually, as we can see now, it was also an epoch of mental and ethical stupor of awesome dimensions; souls were imbued with spiritual calluses and bodies were covered with festering sores which had not been seen since mankind's barbaric days. A physician in San Francisco not long ago published a study of Haight Ashbury in which he reported the reappearance there of skin diseases believed to have been eradicated in the Middle Ages.

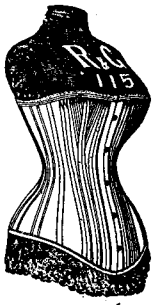
In some photographs, Mr. Lennon presented the face of a dyspeptic Dickensian misanthrope; in others he looked like a martinet British NCO from movies based on Kipling's tales. The *Chicago Tribune,* and many other distinguished organs of the press, called him a philosopher in their tributes. If he was, then who was Aristotle, Spinoza, Kierkegaard, Santayana, Husserl? Has the age of gobbledygook (the very substance of the 1960's) not yet ended? The huge vigils, soaked in frustrated weepiness (which can so easily transform into a mindless rage), tell us it hasn't, prove that the mass-man, the product of the 1960's, is still very much with us. During the 1970's we were told that the hippie generation had come of age, become fragmented, turned narcissistic and now served Wall Street. In mid-December 1980, however, a hundred thousand of them exhumed their ponchos, parkas, beads and bandanas and descended upon Central Park to commemorate Mr. Lennon. The mass-man, or mass-person, celebrated once more the mysteries of collective moods, frenzies, solaces, guidelines for how to sing, feel, live. The 20th-century mass-man is dangerously prone to accepting any inflammatory banality as supreme wisdom: in our lifetime that tendency has been responsible for fascism, Auschwitz, communism, the Gulag and—in the democracies—for the mass-hysteria of the 1960's. Ortega y Gasset saw in him/her the single most sinister threat to human civilization.

One of the dailies featured an interview with a female participant in a Lennon vigil rally. She was in tears: "I'm here for John," she said, "I've been a Beatles fan since I was 10 and they were the most important thing in my life."

How sad, we thought when we read those words. What a poor, empty life... □

Social Register

We grieve the passing of Miss Mae West, a lady who proved that verbal innuendos and well-covered (but well-moved) hips have more erotic power than the entire plastic empire of *Playboy.* The mourners at Miss West's funeral noticed her astonishingly youthful and appealing look in the casket; one of them even remarked: "After all, Mae was always famous for looking much better than she should." That's a good point—and it says a lot about the supremacy of true sensual elegance over the synthetic obtuseness of *Penthouse* pornographers.



* * *

We are delighted to report that the present cultural establishment amuses itself, or keeps swinging, unperturbed by inflationary pressures and the uncertain international situation. Mr. Donald Henley, a distinguished member of a fabulously wealthy rock group, the Eagles, was recently arrested for giving drugs to two girls—15 and 16 years old. His difficulties began after a revelry which included cocaine, Quaaludes and merriment in the nude. Such reliable entertainment is much envied and admired in certain circles. □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Rockford Institute
P.O. Box 5705
Rockford, Illinois 61125

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED